ENVIRONMENT — 1998

JAN. — MARCH

rose over an overcast Johannesburg skyline on Thursday. PHOTOGRAPH: LINDSAY YOUNG

Government moves to get rid of toxic timebomb

By BENITA VAN EYSSEN

Plans to rid South Africa of more than 600 tons of obsolete pesticides and insecticides – all internationally banned and extremely dangerous – began this week when the Government put out a tender for their removal and destruction.

Among the substances to be cleared are stocks of DDT and BHC compounds that have still been in use in South Africa, despite being outlawed in almost every other part of the world.

Drums of potentially deadly pesticides intended for agricultural use were bought by the authorities over the past 40 years to boost agriculture.

Many of the drums were never used and lay discarded on farms and at storage facilities around the country.

"We have developed a business plan (for the removal of the pesticides) and the first thing is to get the tender accepted," said Dr Chris Blignaut, deputy director-general of agriculture.

Some of the pesticides will be burnt, while those that South Africa can dispose of in a safe manner will be covered in cement and buried, Blignaut said.

A large portion of South Africa's obsolete pesticide stock is contained at government depots in North West Province and at Northern Cape towns such as Prieska, De Aar and Upington, where substances such as those containing the banned active ingredient BHC were used until recently to combat locust plagues.

Of the banned chemicals due to be destroyed, BHC is just one of about 15 active ingredients which have been withdrawn from the international market.

Although some of the active ingredients have been banned and their importation outlawed by the local market for many years, drums containing the chemicals are still stored on many farms around the country.

"Farmers may not be using these pesticides anymore, but because they cannot dispose of it themselves, it poses a great risk," said Crop Protection and Animal Health Association director Jan Kleynhans.

Kleynhans said farmers, who were becoming increasingly environmentally conscious, would be relieved when the burden of having such dangerous substances on their land was lifted.

Using pesticide containing active ingredients such as aldrin, dieldrin, arsenic, nendrin, nicotine, TDE, mercury compounds, leptophos, chlorobenzilate, chlordimeform, heptachlor and antimicrobial agents is illegal. Although their expiry dates may have passed, these chemicals are still lethal.

Any physical contact with these chemicals, including inhalation, can result in death.

The highly controversial DDT is still being used by the Health Department's malaria control programme in malaria zones in many parts of the country.

TO PAGE 2

(56) Star 3/1/98

DDT

Star 3/1/98

FROM PAGE 1

At one stage, DDT was the only weapon against the mosquito-borne disease in KwaZulu Natal, Mpumalanga and Northern Province.

In the early 1990s, environmentalists embarked on a campaign to pressure the government to stop using DDT, which is sprayed on to traditional homes, wetlands and swamps during the rainy season to curb malaria. At the time, authorities announced that the substance would be phased out and an ecologically viable alternative sought.

It is not clear whether the substance has been phased out completely, but government sources claim the importation of DDT continues, with a South African company importing 200 tons from the Far East last year.

Traces of DDT were found in the breast milk of women in northern KwaZulu Natal about five years ago. Officially, DDT was last used in KwaZulu Natal two years ago, according to a spokesman for the province's health department.

Sparrebosch a model plan, claims Fick

(5b) CT 5/1/98

STAFF REPORTER

THE conditions of approval of the Sparrebosch development on Knysna's eastern head would ensure that the town became a tourism asset to the Garden Route and set an example of how developments should be planned and managed in this area, according to MEC for planning Mr Lampie Fick.

Fick claimed that Sparrebosch would become a lesson to developers and authorities who had contributed in the past to disasters, and that the cost of the environmental management of the multi-million rand Sparrebosch luxury housing and golf course project would rather inhibit development than open the floodgates, as had been alleged by environmental groups opposed to it.

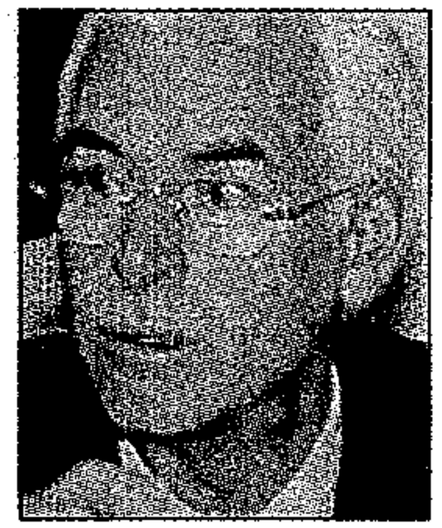
Said Fick: "Environmental organisations represent an important part of the public conscience and I gladly accept their advice. In this case I have accepted about 90% of their advice and incorporated it into the conditions for approval."

While Fick praised these conditions of approval, the Knysna Environmental Forum dismissed them as being "about as useful as putting a plaster on someone hit by a bomb".

Fick said no state or provincial department, or any non-governmental organisation had proposed any development other than residential or resort on the land where Sparrebosch was to be built.

"During 1992 an initial assessment of the impacts of a residential estate was undertaken by the Environmental Evaluation Unit of the University of Cape Town. Representatives of several organisations were involved in the process. Of importance is that the impact of the development on the fynbos area was not mentioned as an issue of concern by any of these organisations. The only 'ecological reservation' was potential increased access to and pressure on the Sparrebosch forest.

"A residential estate of some 2 000 houses could have been approved. The current approval is for 500 housing units and an hotel, which will cover 26% of the land. Another 14% will be utilised by the golf course. This will leave 60% of the property undisturbed. The Sparrebosch forest will become a nature reserve and the most sensitive parts of the land will not be developed at all," said Fick.



SATISFIED: Lampie Fick

He said the availability of water and the impact on the Knysna lake system was a major concern. The golf course would be irrigated with treated effluent from the municipal sewerage system. In its peak summer months the golf course would need about one-million litres of irrigation water. This was less than 20% of the six megalitres produced by Knysna at the moment.

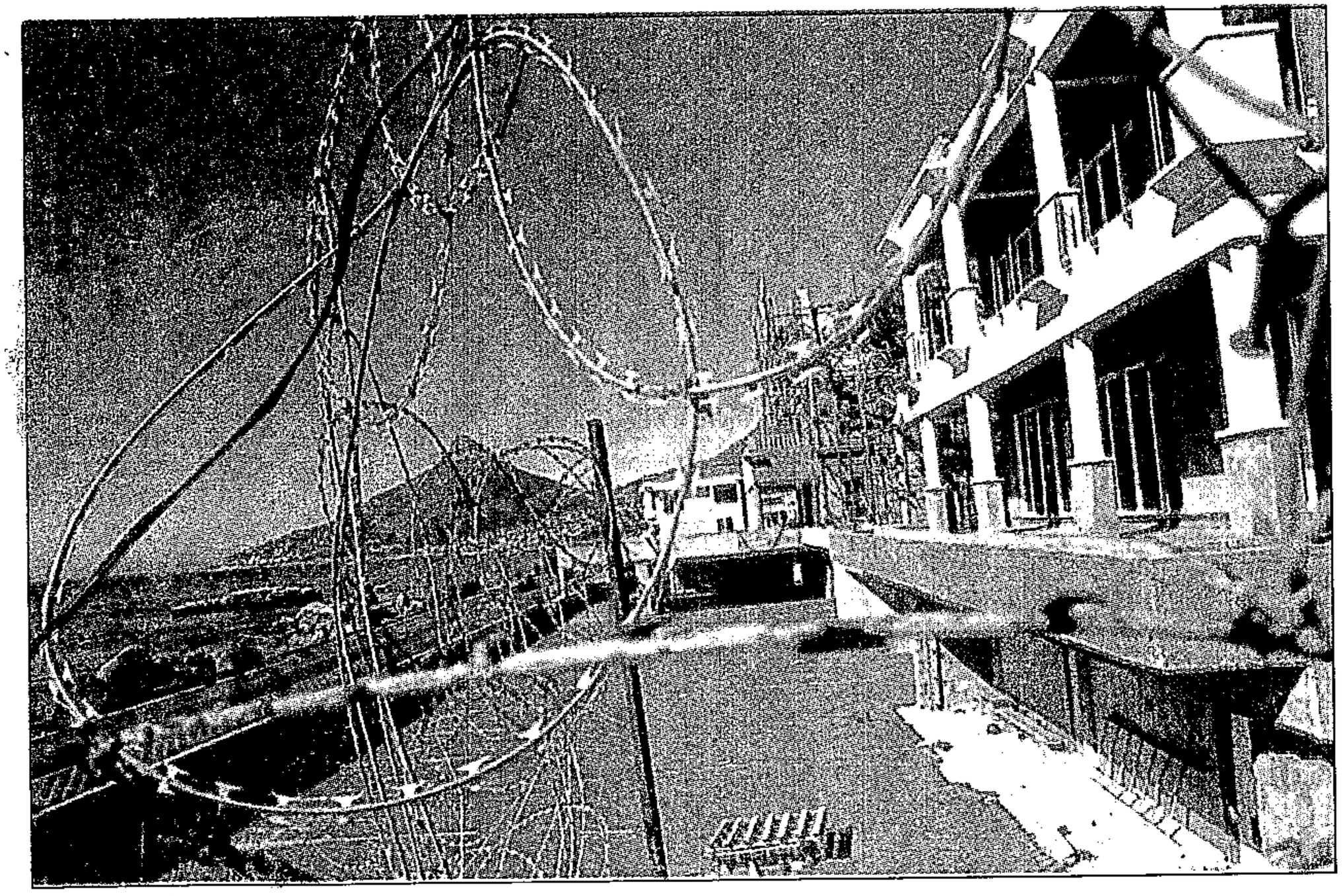
A detailed drainage plan needed to be drawn up, and drainage from the golf course would be monitored regularly to comply with predetermined standards. Contingency facilities had to be provided to deal with emergency situations, he said.

"Provision has been made for the approval of an environmental management plan by the provincial government and the Knysna Council, as well as for the appointment of an environmental management committee and an environmental control officer to monitor and report to the authorities.

"Strong penalties for non-compliance with the conditions of approval and deviations from the environmental management plan will be applicable. In addition, the authorities have been exempted from any possible claim for damages should they stop operations for non-compliance by the developer," Fick said.

Oudekraal development 'on the rocks'

CT 8/1/98 (56)



SHORT OF FUNDS: The controversial White House hotel development is financially on the rocks, and the Standard Merchant Bank has applied to have the developer provisionally liquidated. *PICTURE: GARTH STEAD*

RONALD MORRIS

THE controversial multi-million-rand White House development near Camps Bay "is well and truly on the rocks", the Cape Town High Court was told yesterday.

Mr Gavin Woodland, counsel for Standard Corporate and Merchant Bank, said this in an application for the liquidation of the White House developer, Hottentots Huisie Investments (Pty) Ltd, on the grounds that it is commercially insolvent.

Environmental groups have hit out at the authorities over the pending liquidation, saying that when they grant permission for developments in environmentally sensitive areas they should ensure that the developers have the money to finish them.

One thing worse than having a major development scarring a scenic landscape, they say, is having a half-finished one, which is even more of an eyesore.

Save the Mountain spokesperson Ms Desre Buirski said yesterday: "Forget about the White House — this is going to be one, big white elephant."

Hottentots Huisie is a property investment company whose sole director is Mr Steven Lloyd Jones. Jones and his wife Linda are trustees and capital and income beneficiaries of the SLJ Trust.

In papers, Mr Brett Shaw, manager: property finance, said the developers owed the bank about R33 million including capitalised interest.

This debt arose out of two "facility letters" in which R27m and a further R1,6m were advanced to enable Hottentots Huisie to develop a luxury hotel complex comprising 73 units.

Shaw said that during September and October last year the bank had become increasingly concerned about the financial situation of Hottentots Huisie Investments.

In particular, it had become concerned about the financial involvement of Accor — a French company specialising in hotel management — in respect of cost overruns related to their involvement in the management of the hotel; the issue of guarantees in favour of Ken Stevens Construction; the repayment of the loan as a result of the level of pre-sales and the fact that the total facility the bank had granted Hottentots Huisie Investments was being exceeded.

Between October and November the bank had entered into protracted discussions with the developer and GMR White House Joint Venture.

❑ Turn to Page 3

P.T.O.

CAPE TIMES
FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 1998 ★

ARNISTON RESIDENTS REJECT EXPLOITATION

'Don't shut your eyes to our dunes'

CT 9/1/98 (56)

A MULTI-MILLION RAND luxury housing development is causing consternation in the picturesque, historic village of Arniston. Environment Reporter **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

"EVERYONE who has eyes to see will understand why this land should be declared a national monument."

These were the words of Ms Joanna Marks of the National Monuments Council (NMC), when she told a meeting of about 300 people in Arniston why the rolling dune fields north of the town should be declared a national monument to protect it from any development.

Plans are in the pipeline for a multi-million rand housing and hotel development on the dunes.

At a rowdy meeting yesterday, town folk, holiday home-owners and fishermen gave a resounding "no" vote by a show of hands to any development.

The meeting was called by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, commissioned by the developers to assess the impact of the development on the environment.

The aim of the meeting was to share the council's assessment with the local people.

The NMC has written to the owners of the land earmarked for development, known as Dolla's Downs, to say they were considering provisionally declaring the land a national monument. This would effectively freeze any development there for five years, and give all parties time to negotiate.

Marks said the area was of great national beauty and was right next to the fishermen's village, Kassiesbaai, a national monument.

"We are legally bound to protect existing national monuments which includes the landscapes surrounding them," she said.

The land is owned by a Cape Town widow and her family, who the developer declined to name.

The NMC said if they did declare the land a monument they would not have to pay compensation to the owner.

The developers are estate agents Mr Denis Quayle and Mr Conrad de Swart, who have formed St Markus Bay Investments (Pty) Ltd. They said they intended to buy Dolla's Downs. The price was confidential, they said.

Dolla's Downs stretches north from Arniston for 1,8 kilometres along the coast and comprises an area of 163 hectares — about six times the size of Arniston village.

The CSIR began the environmental impact assessment last summer. They first looked at the opportunities and constraints that the site offered and also carried out specialist scientific studies on aspects like the ecology, water, infrastructure, archaeology, and concerns raised by the local community. Using all this information they drew up five scenarios:

- Leave the site as it is.
- Use it for agriculture which would allow five houses to be built.
- Sub-divide into seven small holdings of 21 hectares each.
- Build 300 houses, a lodge, restaurant and chalets in a section of the land and leave the rest as a nature reserve.
- Build 123 houses, 50 chalets and a restaurant and leave the rest as a nature reserve.

The developers have said that scenario five is their preferred option. The first three scenarios require no rezoning permission.

The developers plan to submit their rezoning application to the provincial authorities in February.

This will be one of the first development "hot potatoes" that incoming MEC for Planning, Mr Kobus Meiring, will handle.

De Swart, the developer, said he was unperturbed by the level of opposition from the community to his development proposal: "We believe this is one of the best investigated sites from an environmental point of view anywhere in Arniston.

"The environmental impact assessment (EIA) looked at all sorts of aspects like water, ecology, archaeology, birds, you name it. We have also taken the concerns of the community into account by having all these meetings and listening to what they have to say. Then taking all that into account, we came up with the five scenarios.

"We are confident that this EIA process will come up with a good solution."

But most of the 300 people at the meeting seemed to disagree, and there was a strong feeling that even
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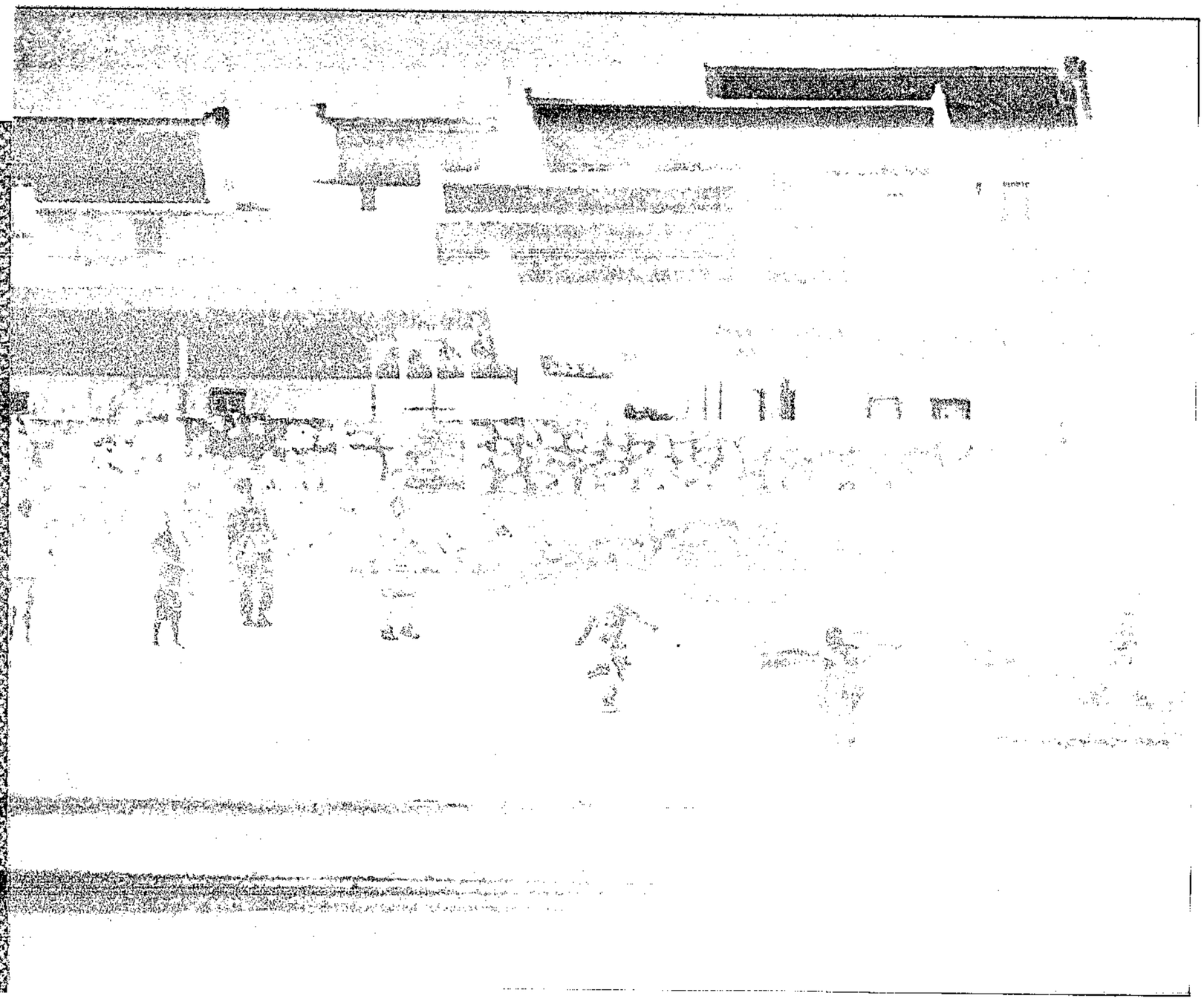
HARBOUR HAMLET: The famous collection



of historic fishermen's cottages at Arniston, called Kassiesbaai, is under threat of being swamped by development. **PICTURE: GARTH STEAD**

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e Arniston-Waenhuiskraans
rvation Association said they
e the Dolla's Downs development because:

- It would increase the pressure on the fishing stocks and would mean local fishermen would lose work. But the scientific study said that 71% of all fish caught here were by outsiders.
- The development would destroy the shifting dune system. The scientific study said the development scenario four and five would have little effect on the dunes or on the beach.
- Sewage pollution.
- It would destroy the unique aesthetics of the place, which they said was one of SA's most photographed and painted scenes.
- The borehole water on the site would eventually run out and the development would have to use municipal water which the Arniston residence would have to pay for in their rates.

But the water study says the borehole water can support about 250 households if it is not pumped out faster than three litres a second. At this speed it can be replenished.

Some fishermen at the meeting said they would support the development provided there was a guarantee of jobs.

White House work grinds to halt

ARG 13/1/98 (56)

French offer R8-m

CHENÉ BLIGNAUT AND ALIDE DASNOIS
STAFF REPORTERS

The White House hotel construction site at Oudekraal was deserted yesterday, the first working day after the builders' holiday.

A lone security guard told the Cape Argus that some builders had arrived early yesterday to remove their machinery and tools but no work had been done.

The building contractors, GMR White House Joint Venture (Murray and Roberts Cape and Grinaker Building Cape), have joined Standard Corporate and Merchant Bank in High Court liquidation proceedings against the developer, Hottentots Huisie Investments.

GMR says Hottentots Huisie, of which Steven Jones is the sole director, owes them R5,6-million for work done.

The bank claims the company is insolvent and does not have the estimated R18-million needed to complete the R54-million project.

The bank is claiming R28,65-million for repayment of loans for building the 73-room luxury sectional title hotel.

It also claims Mr Jones exceeded his loan facility by R5-million, bringing the total owed to the bank to R33,65-million.

"My clients are saying they want nothing to do with the developer's fight with the bank. He (Mr Jones) owes them R5,6-million and if he doesn't pay, they want him to be liquidated," said GMR's lawyer, Maurice Phillips.

As one of the main creditors, the builders wanted to bring "clarity" to the issue.

They had exercised their builders' lien, meaning they had laid claim to the project as security for their claim. In line with normal procedure, this security was waived to the bank, which would be the first creditor to be paid out if the liquidation succeeded, said Mr Phillips.

Mr Jones, who has steadfastly denied allegations that he is bankrupt, again told the Cape Argus yesterday: "We have the money. There is no problem."

He said French hotel management company Accor Afrique had agreed to invest R8-million, which would be enough to complete the project.

He denied that the builders would apply for liquidation, saying they were more likely to sue the bank for not "honouring its guarantees to them".

There was not much building work to be done and sub-contractors would continue to "add the finishing touches" this week.

Accor Afrique head Jean-Luc Motot said from Paris yesterday that his group was fully behind the development in spite of the liquidation threat.

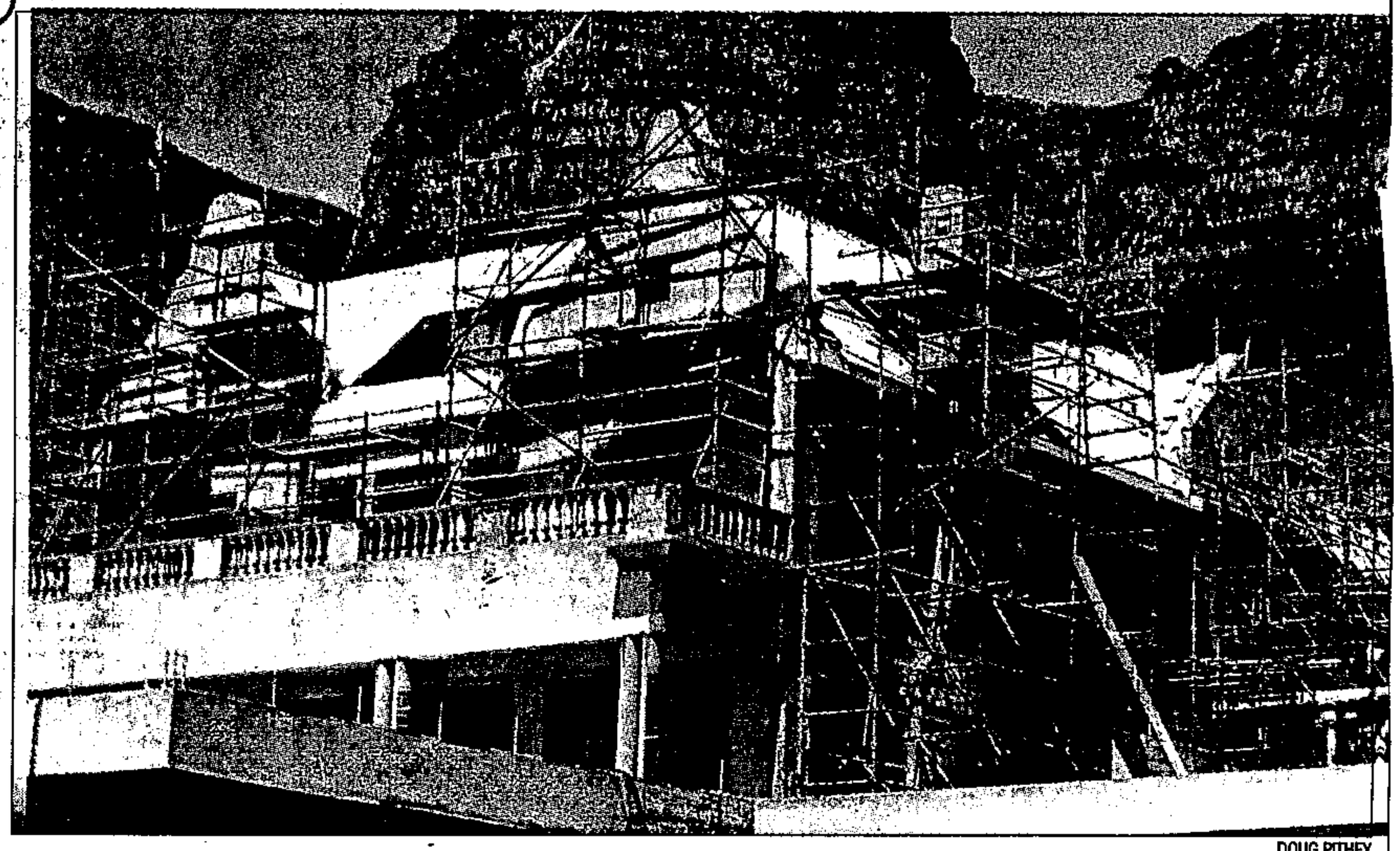
He said R8-million would be made available as a loan to Mr Jones immediately to cover the cost of finishing the building.

Later Accor would assist him in organising further finance of R32-million through another bank.

"We have no doubts about the quality of the project," Mr Motot said. "That is not an issue. It seems there were some misunderstandings about the financing.

"Apparently as the project evolved, the costs changed."

Accor had signed a management contract with Mr Jones and the hotel would be marketed worldwide as one of the famous Sofitel chain, owned by Accor, Mr Motot said.



DOUG PITHEY

Cash-strapped: work is at a standstill on the Oudekraal hotel development, but the developer says 'finishing touches' will continue

Breakthrough (56) for blue cranes

Star 15/1/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

A pair of blue crane chicks have been successfully hatched by means of artificial insemination, paving the way for similar successes in other endangered species.

Pretoria Zoo spokesman Hestelle Robinson said yesterday the zoo was the first organisation in the country to have had successes with inseminating blue cranes. The chicks were hatched early last month using a 15-year-old blue crane breeding pair.

Kevin McCann, coordinator of the Eskom Endangered Wildlife Trust National Crane Conservation Project, said they had started a large crane-breeding programme, which also involved the critically endangered wattle crane, two years ago.

"This (the blue crane insemination) is the first success since then and for us it is as important as the wattle crane," he said. The wattle crane has been listed as critically endangered and according to McCann there are only 250 of the birds left in South Africa, with between 70 and 80 breeding pairs.

Blue cranes are endemic to South Africa except for small populations in Namibia and Swaziland. There is no accurate data on their exact numbers but it is estimated there are between 14 000 and 21 000. There were well in excess of 100 000 of the birds in the 1950s.

"The eastern parts of the country have lost about 80% of their populations since the early 1980s," McCann said.

"The populations in the Karoo, from the Northern Cape to the Eastern Cape and those in the Overberg around Caledon and Bredasdorp make up the majority of the population in the country."

The technology used to inseminated the blue cranes was learnt from the US.

McCann said the methods used were fairly difficult, but once mastered there was a good chance of successful hatchlings.

"We now have an institution that has had success and there is a lot of hope for the captive wattle populations," he added.

Seekoeivlei project in Free State needs money or it may fail

(56) Star 16/1/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris

The continuation of the Seekoeivlei rehabilitation project at Memel in the north-eastern Free State is hanging in the balance because of a lack of funds.

The first phase of the project was the rehabilitation of the Seekoeivlei wetland in a bid to manage Gauteng's water catchment area more efficiently. Just two years after the start of the project, the wetland – the largest on the escarpment – was accepted as the 15th Ramsar site in South Africa, placing it in the same category as St Lucia and the Langebaan estuary.

According to Free State Nature Conservation spokesman Coenie Erasmus further development, including the establishment of the Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve which will be home to a wide variety of birds including rare waterbirds, game and hippo, has been put on hold until money has been allocated from the provincial government.

Wetland filters millions of litres of water

The wetland is already home to several rare white winged flufftails as well as a pair of endangered wattle cranes.

Two males have also been imported from America and will be released as soon as funds are available to buy satellite transmitters to track them when released.

Nature Conservation's aim was to initially attract people to the Seekoeivlei area through birding clubs and later to extend the site into a fully fledged reserve with camps and chalets.

"We have a lot of plans for the area. As soon as the government gives us the money, we can go ahead with the development of the area. If we carry on with the development now it will only cost us R5-million. The longer we wait the more it is going to cost us if we estimate a (price) escalation of about 20% each year," he said.

The success of the project to date has been attributed to the involvement of a number of organisations including Rand Water who donated R2,5-million, 80% of which was spent on the Memel community.

"All the work was done by means of manual labour, providing work for close to 300 people who were previously unemployed. About 60% of these people were single parents, most of them women," Erasmus said.

Apart from benefiting the local community it is hoped that the wetland will benefit water consumers in Gauteng as its main hydrological function is to purify the millions of litres of water in the Vaal Dam catchment area.

Seekoeivlei – the only wetland between Gauteng and its catchment area – captures and filters 46 million cubic litres of water to Gauteng each year. Because the water is filtered as it passes through the wetland the quality of water is much higher, keeping purification costs which invariably impact on consumers, to a minimum.

Chris Viljoen, spokesman for Rand Water, said that together with world class purification methods, this would result in high quality water flowing into the Vaal River system and eventually into people's homes.

Free State nature conservation is also negotiating contracts with Rand Water for the development of two other projects involving an extensive investigation into the possible rehabilitation of other wetlands in the area as well as the development of an artificial wetland between QwaQwa and the Vaal Dam.

This is of vital importance because the water from the QwaQwa area is the regarded as the most polluted in the country, added Erasmus.

Breeding plan to try to save the endangered serval cat

(56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

The owners of the Cango Wildlife Ranch in Oudtshoorn are hoping to ensure the survival of one of the country's most endangered cats – the serval – with a new breeding programme on the ranch.

The ranch already has a male serval which it hopes to successfully mate with a young female called Star which arrived from the Lugaroi Bird Park in Victoria West recently.

Ranch manager John Field said they were hoping to have as much success with the serval breeding programme as they have had with their cheetah and wild dog programmes.

According to ranch managing director Andrew Erikson, the serval cats are very similar to cheetah except that they are much smaller and have larger ears.

"They are spotted so this is where the problem comes in. People confuse them with cheetah.

"They live mainly on farmland and are competing with the farmers for living space.

"They live primarily on rodents, birds and small mammals and are in fact beneficial to farmers," he said.

The number of serval in South Africa is not known.

Cango Wildlife Ranch is working in conjunction with the African Preservation Programme which ensures co-ordinated breeding of endangered animals across the continent.

According to Erikson the programme ensures that the gene pool of captured animals remain clean and that those animals that can be released back into the wild are clean.

"There have been successful releases by the Johannesburg Zoo, so we know that it can be done.

"The female serval is only four months old and is still a little too young to go with the male.

"We will wait until she is a bit older before putting them together.

"We are hoping that within a year they will start breeding," Erikson said.

Star 16/1/98

Business must quantify its social costs

CT (BR) 20/1/98 (56)

ADELE SHEVEL

The environment has often been a mere receptacle for business's expansion and development projects, the costs of which have largely been borne by society. That position could change with a new law due to come into effect shortly which is aimed at improved compliance with environmental regulations.

From April this year, businesses will be legally bound to conduct environmental impact assessments (EIA) before being granted approval to effect expansion or development. EIAs have been used in the past, but now they will now be legally binding.

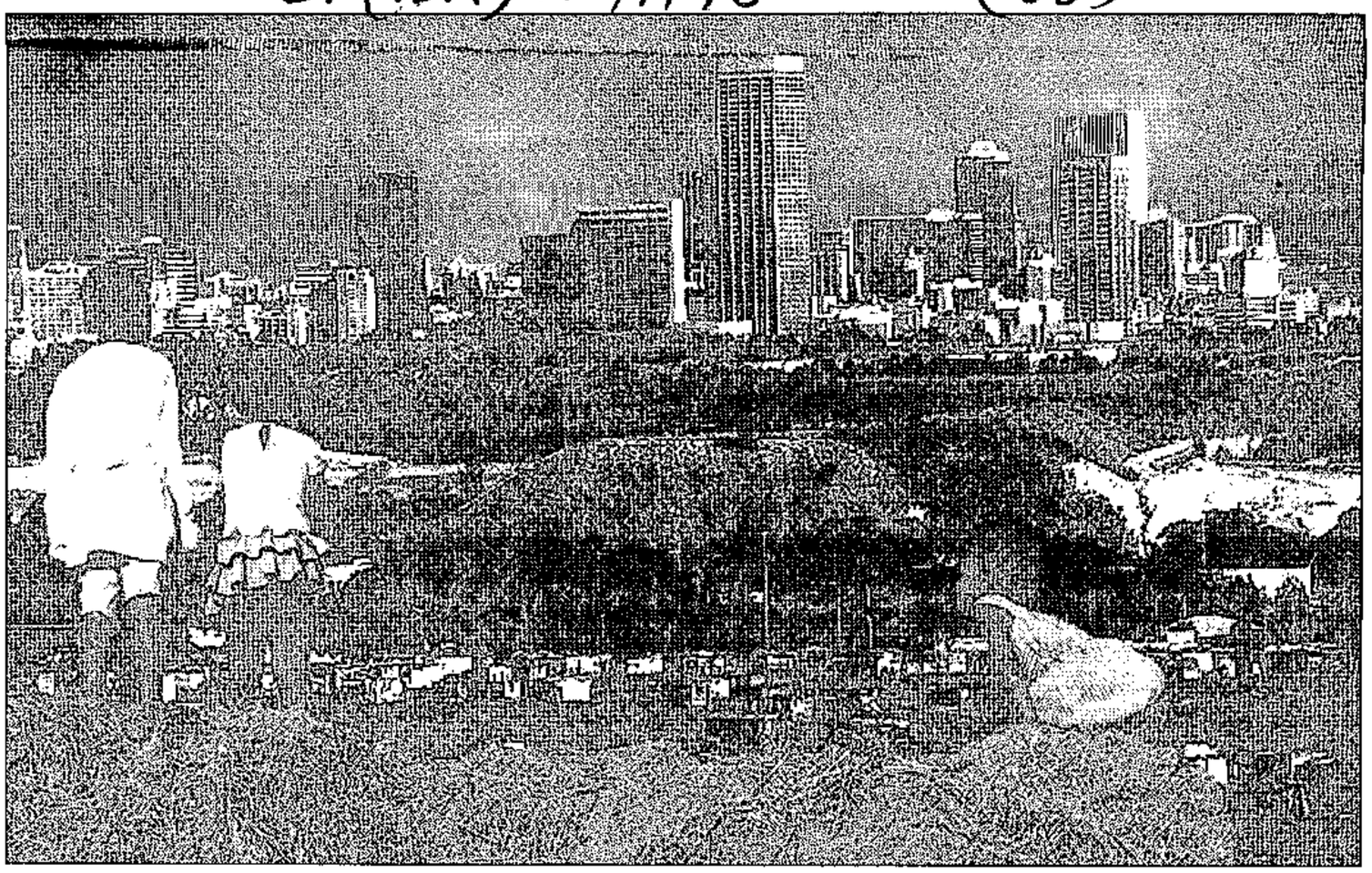
An EIA costs about 1 or 2 percent of total project cost, although some environmentalists say it should be 5 to 7 percent. These assessments are used to highlight the social cost of environmental impacts.

Environmental costing has always been conducted from a qualitative perspective but as it enters a more quantitative realm environmental economics has a role to play in determining the short, medium and long-term financial and economic benefits against the environmental costs of a project.

Jutta Berns, an environmental economics consultant, says there are several long-term benefits from the new regulations. These include improved buy-in from and participation by the wider community, as well as environmental benefits such as improved assurance that environmental resources are still available for future generations.

"EIAs contribute to make sure that environmental concerns, including people, are given consideration in development projects," says Berns.

Shayne Krige, an environmental lawyer with Bowman Gilfillan Hayman Godfrey, a firm of attorneys, says "government will have to balance issues of infrastructural progress, reconstruction and development against the individual's constitutional right to an environment that is not harmful to health or well being.



"The new regulations passed in terms of the Environment Conservation Act are an attempt to create such a balance by requiring that industry conduct EIAs before it undertakes the activities identified in the new regulations."

The EIA affects every stage of construction and expansion, including construction or upgrading of all industrial sectors, transport routes and structures, and manufacturing; as well as the development of harbours, cableways and communication networks. Any change of land use, from residential use to industrial or commercial or agricultural, will also be required to obtain endorsement.

An applicant (a business) has to appoint an independent consultant to make sure the business complies with all the regulations. The applicant is responsible for all costs associated with the study, and to ensure the evaluation is performed to fulfil obligations in terms of the regulations.

"At present, however, the government, especially provincial government, lacks sufficiently experienced personnel or resources to implement the regulations," says Krige.

"The reality is that people are becoming more environmentally aware and the law is responding," he says.

Krige says the assessment will have positive repercussions for society, though initially will require a change in mindset and the commitment of resources.

"The environment will be better looked after, industry will gain credibility, and, domestically and internationally, business will be more competitive.

"At present there are fewer than 20 independent environmental consultants in Gauteng with the capacity and training to perform medium-to-large-scale EIAs under the new regulations."

Sources say a vagueness about the process adds to the complexity. There are no transitional or interim provisions, which means business has no clear guidelines or legal structures regarding developments that have already conducted studies but will only begin actual development after the regulations come into force.

It is also not known whether certain evaluations will be redundant because they do not comply with the new regulations.

One arena which will benefit from the legal requirements is the new industry itself. It will have to evolve into one that bridges science, law and business. Krige says environmental law is one of the fastest developing areas in South African law.

But independent consultants who conduct the research do not have price parameters they have to work within, as there is no association or body controlling it.

Berns says that in the past costs to society often far outweighed the monetary costs of projects in terms of psychological and cultural costs communities have suffered at the hands of relocation.

She maintains that the benefits of long-term environmental planning through these assessments will outweigh costs as the environment is given greater regard. "Greater public participation prevents sabotage, non-compliance and riots. But we need a massive education drive to highlight the long-term benefits of the programmes."

South Africa is acknowledged as the most advanced country on the continent in terms of environmental awareness, policy formulation and application. Berns says that South Africa is also more advanced internationally than one would think because of pressing realities of the country.

"We can't dabble in an ivory tower. Though we may not be near international standards from a policy perspective, in terms of research and implementation we are at the cutting edge."

The list of users who have to undertake such assessments is extensive. Some are not controversial extensions but will nonetheless require the undertaking of the acts at additional costs.

Koos Alberts, a director of Planning Development and Environmental Services, says the procedure could be lengthy and is expected to delay the land development process. "Business is not sufficiently prepared for the implications."

Several businesses have expressed concerns about the time and cost implications. Business is not sure if there are sufficiently qualified people to deal with the projects and a potential bottleneck situation.

One point is indisputable. The act highlights South Africa's need to satisfy both First and Third World objectives.

Company could be charged after Midrand acid spill

Star 31/1/98 (56)

By MIKE MASIPA and ELLIOTT SYLVESTER

The company transporting hundreds of litres of highly toxic sulphuric acid that spilt from a tanker along about 1km of public road in Midrand yesterday, may face prosecution after investigations have been completed.

Midrand council officials said there were no serious injuries. But the general manager of the Carstenhof Clinic, Wilhelm Theunissen, said that by late yesterday nine people had been treated at his clinic for minor irritations caused by being in contact with the acid or inhaling the fumes.

Two people were admitted, although they were not in a serious condition, he said.

Divisional officer of the Midrand fire department Nicol Bell described the acid as a corrosive agent and urged anyone who had come into contact with it to wash the affected area thoroughly with water.

If the symptoms (itchy skin, burning eyes and chest) continued, people should seek medical treatment as soon as possible.

The spill, in an industrial park off the Old Pretoria Road, was thought to have been caused by a faulty valve on the tanker. However, Bell said it was discovered later that there was a fracture on the tank itself which released 500 litres of acid.

He said further investigations would determine if anyone was at fault or negligent – and prosecution of the guilty parties "is sure to follow".

Emergency workers, police and traffic officers struggled for hours to contain possible damage from the spill. They neutralised the substance by spreading lime and sand over the area covered by the spill.

The spilt acid ran down the road from the intersection of George and Sixteenth avenues to an open piece of land near Crest Chemicals' premises, where the Dirkie Potgieter Transport tanker was to make the delivery.

By midday yesterday, emergency personnel began the big task of evacuating staff and workers from blocks of offices and factories in the centre of the danger area.

The chief of Midrand council's emergency services, Willie van Rooyen, said the evacuation on the single-lane roads needed to be done systematically to avoid bottlenecks during peak-hour traffic.

Many workers in the area were seen abandoning their vehicles and walking to nearby offices unaffected by the spillage.

Members of the dog unit were called in to assist in finding any acid deposits which had been overlooked and also to help with the evacuation.

Van Rooyen said they had managed to neutralise the spill, although the accident was reported nearly an hour after it occurred.

He said that once the acid [illegible] trapped in sand [illegible] diluted to a level [illegible] longer harmful, [illegible] ped into the sewerage system in the area.

"We have taken all necessary precautions to ensure any ecological damage is kept to a minimum. We have ensured none of the sulphuric acid is transferred to the nearby rivers, by blocking the drains and damming the area," he said.

Van Rooyen emphasised that the spillage had been contained in time and allayed fears that it would flow into the Jukskei River.

Arno Benadic, chief chemist for the Midrand council, said the chances of any repercussions were very slim. The acid would be neutralised by lime deposits and diluted by water.

"By tonight (Friday) this should be harmless," he said.

Environmental activist group Earthlife Africa yesterday called for tighter restrictions on the transportation of dangerous substances on public roads.

Spokesman Vanessa Black said she did not know of any council regulations prohibiting the transportation of chemicals in built-up areas. She added that whatever rules existed were too lax.

Black said Earthlife Africa and a residents' organisation, the Midrand Emergency Committee, were scheduled to meet the local town council and representatives from Dirkie Potgieter Transport to discuss what had happened.

She said Midrand residents were at constant risk because chemicals were regularly transported through the area. There was an urgent need to address the matter.

■ This is not the first time toxic fluids have caused chaos in Midrand. Less than two years ago, residents close to the Olifantsfontein Road woke up to find 251 plastic containers filled with sulphuric acid, of the same concentration as the fluid that leaked yesterday, dumped along the side of the road. Some of the containers were punctured but were soon removed by emergency personnel.

The worst incident in Midrand was the Rhone Poulenc chemical fire, which left one person dead and hundreds hospitalised with symptoms of chemical poisoning. The blaze at the pharmaceutical company on September 19 1992 saw about 70 different chemicals incinerated.

A year later, the Delta G scientific company accepted responsibility for a chemical leak into Midrand's sewerage system.

BIG CLEANUP: Specialist emergency workers from the Midrand fire department spent hours cleaning up a sulphuric acid spill yesterday. At least two people were admitted to hospital suffering ill effects

PHOTOGRAPH: CATHY PINNOCK

Ecotourism venture ge

Petty politics stands in the way of fencing for

Back to the marshes: Free State Environment Affairs and Tourism ecologist Narcelle Collins discusses the return of marsh vegetation types to Seekoeivlei with Coenie Erasmus, senior nature conservator for Eastern Free State

This land is wetland: Rand Water chief executive Vincent Bath, left, Coenie Erasmus, senior nature conservator for Eastern Free State and Rand Water manager for water environment Chris Viljoen, right, on one of the weirs built across the Klip River to generate water flow in the Seekoeivlei wetland

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

Pretoria – Petty politics is holding back development of an ecotourism venture seen as vital to the survival of a small eastern Free State community.

Coenie Erasmus, senior nature conservator for Eastern Free State in the province's Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism, says that Memel – only kilometres away from the Seekoeivlei wetland on the Klip River – is disintegrating as a community.

A large portion of the town's future economic survival is dependent on ecotourism coming from Seekoeivlei, a wetland recognised by the Ramsar Convention as being one of international importance.

It is also the only Ramsar site in Free State (declared in November 1996), putting it on par with other South African wetlands such as St Lucia and Langebaan which enjoy international protection as a result of the convention, he said.

Rehabilitation of damage to the wetland, caused over years by human activities including agriculture, has been made possible through a R2,5-million project involving the national Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's Working for Water project, Free State's Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism and utility company Rand Water, which supplies bulk water to Gauteng.

The Seekoeivlei wetland rehabilitation provided employment for 250 previously unemployed people in the Memel community through the construction of gabions and weirs to slow water flow in channels which were dug by farmers to dry out the wetland and make it suitable for grazing.

The 18-month project has seen the wetland spread substantially and Mr Erasmus is confident it is now at the stage where, with minimal man-management, the wetland will return to its original state.

The only factor missing is hippo, from which the wetland takes its name.

The last hippo in the wetland was shot in 1894 and the reintroduction of hippos would speed up Seekeoivlei's

ts bogged down

(56) ARG 21/1/98

hippos

return to its original state, he said.

The large animals are not a problem – Free State Environment Affairs and Tourism owns 11 hippos which are either in national or Natal parks.

The problem is to securely fence the 4 700 km Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve to keep the hippos in.

"Money has been allocated to fence the reserve, but petty politics is stopping it from getting to us," said Mr Erasmus.

"Letters have been written, but replies and approval to start with fencing are not forthcoming.

"And there's no way I'm going to let hippos loose in the 1 800ha wetland and adjoining reserve without a fence.

"Can you imagine the uproar from the local farming community, who have co-operated well with us on the wetland rehabilitation project, when they start losing people and crops to wandering hippos.

"I'm not taking that chance," Mr Erasmus said emphatically.

The problems facing Mr Erasmus and his team are not uncommon in provincial conservation and environment authorities.

Last year World Wildlife Fund-SA warned: "Conservation management is fragmented, morale is low and all provinces are experiencing a massive brain drain of skilled experienced staff."

The conservation management structure is collapsing at a frightening rate, WWF-SA chief executive Ian Macdonald said.

A source within the South African environmental fraternity added: "Free State Environment Affairs and Tourism has suffered several reorganisations, splits and shifts between ministries since 1994.

"The problems have been confounded by political problems experienced in the province."

Staff losses, attempts to incorporate the environmental affairs and tourism functions into the department and massive budget shortfalls have led to an almost complete breakdown of the nature conservation function in this province, said the source.

Apart from being an internationally recognised wetland with ecological, environmental and ecotourism potential, Seekoeivlei serves as a purifier of water destined for Gauteng consumers via Rand Water.

"Wetlands act as natural sponges, filtering and cleaning water flowing through them.

"This results in higher quality water reaching our intake points at the Vaal Dam," said Dr Chris Viljoen, manager: water environment for the utility company.

"The higher the quality of water we receive, the fewer chemicals we have to treat it with, resulting in health and cost benefits for users," he said.

Seekoeivlei is home to two of South Africa's rarest birds – the wattled crane and the whitewinged flufftail.

This alone makes it an ecotourism destination of importance, said Mr Erasmus.

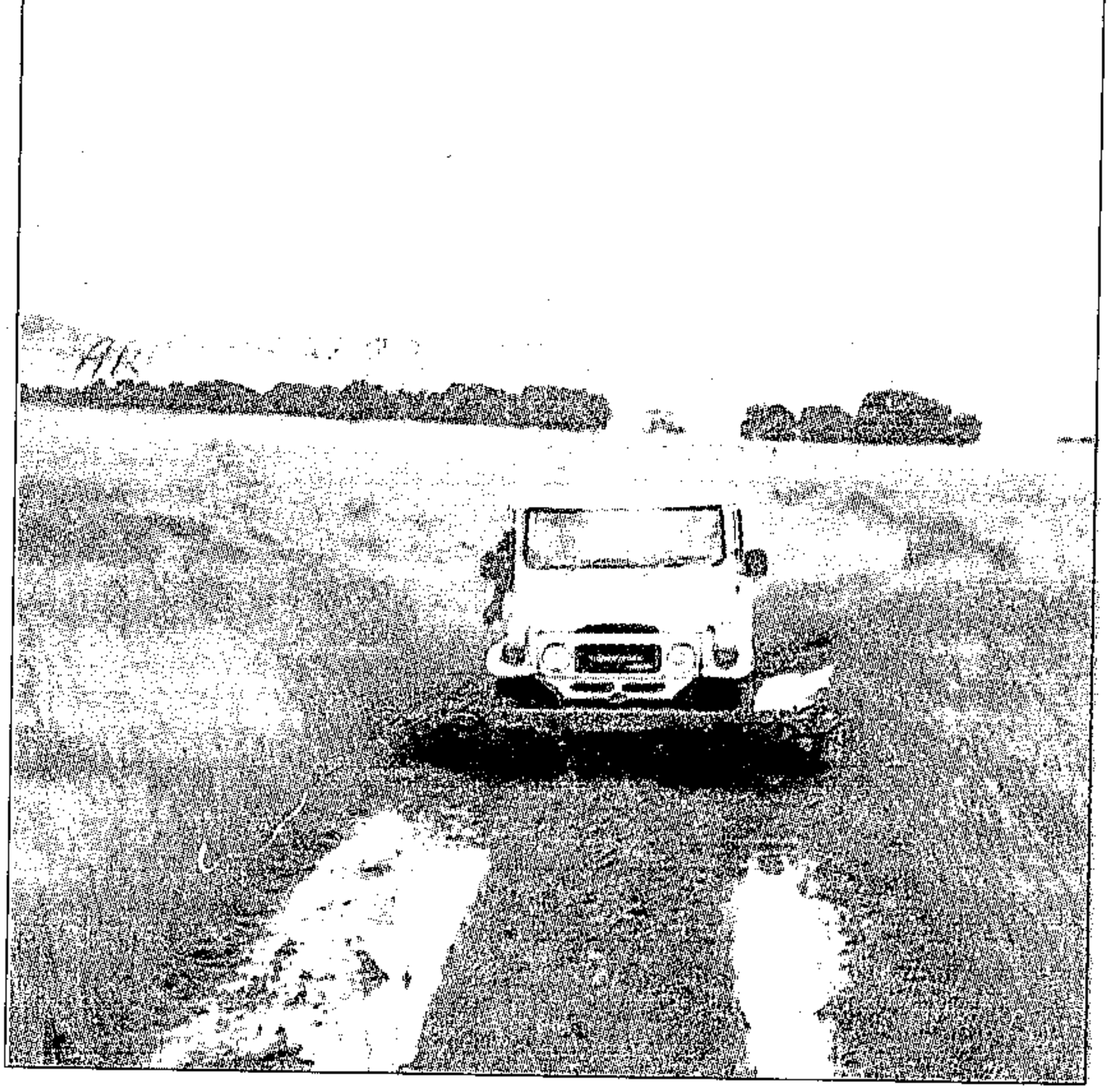
There are two wattled crane males in large pens at Seekoeivlei at present and Free State environment authorities are working closely with the Endangered Wildlife Trust's South African Crane Working Group to increase the population of this scarce crane at Seekoeivlei.

These birds arrived in Eastern Free State from America early last year and it is hoped to release the pair soon.

Mr Erasmus said sightings had been made regularly of three other wattled cranes at Seekoeivlei – two of them are female and have been seen on eggs.

The wetland's other big attraction for birders is the whitewinged flufftail described as rare, erratic and localised in occurrence by *Sasol Birds Of Southern Africa*.

"They're here, we've seen them and so have visitors from birding clubs," he said.



Water wild: a four-wheel-drive vehicle throws up splashes of water as it drives through what was dry grassland three months ago. Good rains together with weirs across the Klip River have speeded up flooding of the Seekoeivlei wetland

Durban has a 'time bomb' sitting in the middle of its harbour

(56) Natal 27/1/98

By Terry Haywood

Island View complex, storage depot for millions of litres of petrol and chemicals, poses a Bhopal-like threat to the city

Durban may be sitting on a "time bomb" of millions of litres of deadly chemicals and explosive petroleum products on the restricted-access Island View tanker farm in Durban harbour.

Senior officials and worried community groups expressed fears this week that the city may be incapable of averting a catastrophe – such as happened at Bhopal in India – if a major accident happened.

The Island View area, closed to the general public and shielded from close scrutiny by the National Key Points Act and the Protection of Information Act, is home to one of the largest tank storage complexes in South Africa.

The complex is a cluster of about 17 companies which store and handle what is possibly one of the country's deadliest cocktails of chemicals, liquids and petroleum products.

And as a result of decades of poor urban planning, it is cheek by jowl to the densely populated neighbourhoods of the Bluff, Brighton Beach and Fynnlands – and about 2km from the Durban CBD.

It is also a short boat-ride from the high profile Point Waterfront Project.

> **"The island seems to have been ignored"**

For several decades the terminal has operated isolated from the City of Durban, answerable mainly to a government security committee and the Portnet harbour authority.

Even today, some companies in the complex appear to be in breach of safety bylaws and national pollution laws.

There is also strong evidence to suggest the soil and groundwater surrounding Island View is heavily polluted with oil.

Ron Andrews, chairman of the Bluff Peninsula Ratepayers Association says: "Industry representatives have dismissed our fears as alarmist and emotional.

"As far as we can ascertain there is no proper evacuation plan to ensure the safety of neighbouring communities and the people of Durban."

Rory O'Connor, a member of the Bluff Ridge Conservancy, says: "We are living in a fool's paradise ... the Durban Metro council is spending R2-million on a strategic environmental assessment of the Durban South area, yet it appears to have completely ignored Island View and the capacity of the city and industry to respond to and contain a major toxic incident."

Durban Fire and Emergency Services chief Mark te Water said there were plans to deal with a major fire, but he was not in a position to comment on health implications in the event of a major chemical incident.

Billy Keeves, head of the Durban Metro disaster management branch, said it was impossible to formulate plans to cover every disaster.

"It's very difficult to answer what our response would be to a worst-case scenario. There are just too many variables involved."

Keeves, asked how emergency services would react to a massive "domino effect" explosion involving neighbouring tanks and companies, said this issue was being dealt with with the help of simulated computer projections.

Durban's deputy medical officer of health Andrew Robinson felt disaster management and evacuation plans needed improvement. The complex should never have been located so close to residential areas.

"If those drums go up, the houses are very close. God forbid that there are ever any major problems."

Robinson cautioned against creating panic and alarm, but suggested that people in neighbouring residential areas should be prepared and made aware of the risks and the potential for problems.

"The situation at Island View is symptomatic of bad urban planning of 50 years ago," he said.

"Only in the past 20 years, after incidents like the Bhopal gas disaster in India, has the penny dropped that industry and residential areas are not good bedfellows."

Robinson, referring to the close proximity of industry and residential areas in the Durban South area as whole, said he believed the city would be saddled with problems for the next 100 years.

"There will always be conflict, and the only real solution is to separate people and industry by a healthy distance." In the short-term it was imperative to ensure the highest possible standards of occupational health and safety at Island View and at the fuel refineries around Wentworth and Merebank But in the long-term, industry and people needed to be separated – either by moving people or moving industry. Tough decisions would have to be made.

But where there was a will there is always a way of doing things – "even if this happened over the next few decades."

He confirmed certain companies in the Island View complex did not have permits to operate in terms of the city's Scheduled Trades and Occupations Bylaws, but said his department had initiated a negotiation process to resolve several issues by involving industry, government, city officials and community groups.

"Some of the industries have a lot of catch-up to do, but we are trying to get them there by the carrot rather than the stick.

> **"Solution is to separate people and industry"**

"We believe the willingness of industry is quite good. It is easy to say that there are problems at Island View, but the trick is to aim for lasting solutions rather than harping on problems."

Angela Rankin, a senior official of the Department of Water Affairs, confirmed there was enough evidence of ground water pollution to warrant a thorough investigation and possible remedying.

Other community sources claimed parts of the complex were so heavily polluted that storage tanks were "floating on oil".

Rankin said her department was concerned about the delays in investigating groundwater pollution and installing a new effluent sewer for the complex.

For many years, the complex had relied on rudimentary effluent treatment which often resulted in discharges of polluted water direct into Durban harbour.

Companies operating storage facilities in the Island View area include Island View Storage, Van Ommeren, Castrol, Total, Natref, Engen, Sapref, Zenex and Caltex.

Arniston fishermen blow their tops over missile test

Denel told to pay up for fishing ban

(56) ARG 27/1/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Scores of angry fishermen held a rowdy protest at Denel's Overberg test range near Arniston over the closure of fishing grounds for a missile test.

The protest yesterday came after Denel put up a notice announcing the closure.

Denel said the notice – posted at the slipway at the picturesque fishing village of Arniston (Waenhuiskrans) and warning that a large area between Skipskop and Ryspunt would be out of bounds for safety reasons – was the normal way of communicating with the fishermen about missile tests.

The company said it was a method that had been used for years, and the fishermen were only warned that the declared area was unsafe. It sazid they were not prohibited from being there until the actual test was about to be begin.

But the fishermen – who described their group as being "more than 200" while Denel estimated them at "about 100" – said they were strongly dissatisfied with the way tests were conducted at the range and they wanted to be compensated for their loss of income during tests.

A delegation from the protesters, consisting of the executive of the Waenhuiskrantz Line Fishermen's Association and several other community leaders, met Denel's divisional chief manager, Jan Malan, yesterday to discuss the issue.

The fishermen presented Dr Malan with eight demands, saying they had "reached the end of the road". Demands included:

- Two hundred permanent jobs at the test range, "as originally promised (by Armscor)".
- R200 per fisherman per day as compensation for loss of income;
- Seven days' notice of tests, the dates of which are to be decided in consultation with the association.;
- No tests during seasonal catches;
- No tests within a five-kilometre radius of known fishing grounds.
- Transfer of 30% of the profits of the test range to the community.

Dr Malan told the Cape Argus that he had "more or less" reached agreement with the fishermen about some of their demands, but that discussions were scheduled to resume tomorrow. "I understand their suffering, and if we can help on a fair basis we will, but we can't give hand-outs."

THE Independent Broadcasting Authority announced yesterday it had cut its 1997/98 budget from R38,8m to R36,95m, a saving of nearly R2m.

"This is in line with the IBA's commitment to assist the government in reducing expenditure, even within the time constraints of the current financial year.

"The (communications) department and ministry are still assisting the IBA to secure remaining outstanding funds for the current financial year," it said.

Schools protest 'will go on all week'

FORMER House of Delegate schools in Phoenix, north of Durban, and Chatsworth, south of the city, continued their third day of protest action against the education department by closing schools early yesterday.

The action was apparently spearheaded by the Association of Governing Bodies of Greater Chatsworth in protest against the provincial education department's implementation of its schools management plan and the proposed laying off of about 6 000 teachers.

Parents' Association of KwaZulu-Natal chairman Cyril Naidoo said his association was not behind the closure and was seeking other ways, including legal action, to get the department to address problems in schools.

Naidoo said he had been informed schools would remain closed until the end of the week.

Cheque plan is banking industry's

THE proposed amendments to the Bills and Exchange Act, which sought to remedy the anomaly that banks were liable for cheque forgeries resulting from customers' negligence, was an initiative by the banking industry and not the Standard Bank, a bank spokesman said.

Standard Bank's Erik Larsen said the Council of SA Banks proposal that risk of loss be shared on the basis of negligence by the parties concerned, was in line with existing laws in the US, France and Germany.

Larsen said the proposals would place an obligation on drawers to take care of their cheques and would help reduce fraud.

REPORTS: Business Day Reporters, Sapa.

Pyramid ownership allowed to empower

BD 29/1/98

Shareen Singh

THE use of pyramid structures and low-voting N-shares by listed companies in SA had gained legitimacy with the emergence of black empowerment, Prof Brian Kantor of the University of Cape Town said yesterday.

He told a black business conference in Johannesburg the Johannesburg Stock Exchange would have restricted the use of pyramids and N-shares had it not been for black empowerment. If the JSE took such action it would have been "an unfortunate regulation of activity", Kantor said.

Most successful corporations in SA were controlled by groups which had a minority claim on the dividends of the companies they headed. Control without majority shareholding had been entrenched in SA through a complicated web of holding, cross-holding and voting structures. The addition of every new layer to a holding company further diluted the ownership stake of the controlling shareholder but maintained their control.

Kantor said this structure had worked in SA because those in control had been able to deliver excellent returns on shareholders investment. The Oppenheimer family, which owns 8% of Anglo American; the Rupert family, which owns 5% of Rembrandt; and the Gordon family, which owns about 15% of Liberty Life, were very successful in this regard.

"Control without (majority) ownership would not have succeeded unless the majority owners were willing to own without control," Kantor said.

The top five listed companies had won the trust of fund managers who controlled billions of rands in retirement and funds and funds which made up at least 90% or more of the value of the JSE.

In the case of JCI, which announced yesterday it would break up, those in control were unable to produce good dividends and might have lost the trust of retirement funds.

Over the past three years the composition of the controllers of listed companies had changed to a degree. However, the ownership of the share in newly established black-controlled companies had remained where it was in the past, with retirement funds, he said.

"Retirement funds have exchanged shares in what had been companies controlled by whites for shares in companies now controlled by blacks."

While changes in ownership and control taking place at the level of listed companies was a major step in black empowerment, it should not be seen as an end in itself, Kantor said. Black economic empowerment would ultimately be measured by what income a black family took home.

Independent water company proposed

(56) BD 29/1/98

David McKay and Josey Ballenger

EAST Rand gold mines are to propose to government today that an independent water company should be formed, in order to rein in costs and improve the mines' environmental record.

Mining management would meet in Pretoria with an interdepartmental committee consisting of minerals and energy and water affairs officials to discuss the construction and operation of three plants to purify underground water pumped from mines in the East Rand basin, industry and government sources said.

The mines include JCI-owned Western Areas and Randfontein, Durban Roodepoort Deep, the Harmony group's Grootvlei, and Consolidated Modderfontein.

Durban Roodepoort Deep MD Mike Prinsloo said a study had identified the advantages of the independent company. The plants were estimated to cost between R200m and R250m each, which would be phased in and modelled after a pilot plant at Grootvlei.

Minerals and energy department acting director-general Dick Bakker said it had made money available for Grootvlei "on a very temporary basis" to improve their settlement process, which removes solid matter from water.

Bakker said the purpose of today's meeting would be for water affairs to give its stamp of approval for the project.

Prinsloo said that if the proposals were well received, a recommendation would be made to the cabinet in about three to four weeks. He said utility Rand Water could join the initiative if it had government's backing, and the proposed company would consist of a range of stakeholders representing the gold mining industry and other concerned parties.

Prinsloo said the water could be purified for human use, which would underpin Rand Water's existing supplies from the Lesotho Highlands water project and the Vaal Dam. "Years of work has gone into this proposal," he said. Durban Deep alone pumps about 240Ml to the surface a day.

Bakker said funding would "have to be worked out between all the shareholders".

The water affairs department, however, was adamant that it would not chip in.

"We have been pretty clear to minerals and energy on many occasions, including at the ministerial level as recently as December, that water affairs will not be funding, in any way, a subsidy to the mining industry," said acting chief director of scientific services Sakkie van der Westhuyzen.

He said under permit from water affairs, the mining industry was allowed to discharge water into public streams, but they also had the obligation to treat the water, which included desalination.

Development ... at a price

CT 29/1/98 (56)

GARTH STRACHAN

What draft legislation could mean for Western Cape development.

ANALYSIS

LOCAL governments councils, environment groups and the public are increasingly expressing grave misgivings about the direction the provincial government is taking in relation to development planning in the Western Cape.

Many have begun to ask why draft legislation has been tabled which will give the responsible MEC final say over land-use and development planning when national legislation has moved in the direction of a far more consultative and inclusive approach.

Serious concerns have also been expressed that the rights of local councils to adopt their own plans will be seriously undermined if the draft legislation is passed in the provincial legislature. What is the difference between the national act and the draft provincial bill? Should we all be taking these concerns more seriously?

Under apartheid, planning and development legislation rested firmly on the foundation of racial classification and spatial or geographic separation. Huge disparities in income, access to economic opportunities, service and infrastructural provision and other socio-economic indicators mirror this racially-based planning framework. Apartheid planning of necessity also ran contrary to many widely accepted principles of planning, including mixed land use, urban densification and integrated development planning. A drive through any south African town provides ample evidence of this legacy — black residential areas are not only hidden from view but often situated many kilometres from the site of jobs and economic opportunities, from schools, hospitals and other services and from sports and recreation facilities.

Faced with the enormous challenge of addressing decades of racially skewed development, the new government passed the Development Facilitation Act (DFA) in 1994. It was designed to speed up the delivery of reconstruction and development by accessing land for development projects under the interim constitution. The act also created a framework for a nationally consistent approach to local government role in development planning and implementation. In close consultation with a range of other stakeholders, including previously disadvantaged communities, local councils are required to draw up Land Development Objectives (LDOs). Together with other local government legislation, namely the Local Government Transition Act, which provides for Integrated Development Plans, these objectives facilitate integrated planning, investment and management in each local council area. The DFA prioritises the need to involve democratically elected local authorities and the public in transparent planning and development decisions. This, it should go without saying, is extremely important when set against decades of apartheid planning which rode roughshod over public opinion, particularly in black communities.

> Environmental concerns appear to be dealt with in only the vaguest references to environment work around planning.

In the same spirit the DFA allows for the creation of provincial tribunals comprised of officials from provincial and local government, the private sector and community organisations. Utilising the Land Development Objectives as their reference frameworks, these tribunals have oversight over decisions to ensure equitable, environmentally sound and financially sustainable plans to proceed. The DFA also established the National Development Planning Commission. It is representative of national and all nine provincial governments, the private sector and community organisations. The commission is tasked with further unravelling the morass of planning and development legislation inherited from apartheid; in some provinces this includes not only the variety of urban legislation but also separate legislation for each bantustan. It must therefore reshape a new long-term legal and administrative framework for planning and land development.

The process of local government driven planning and the establishment of tribunals proceeds apace in other provinces. In the Western Cape, on the other hand, the National Party has seen fit to implement only portions of the DFA and it plans to enact legislation designed to circumvent key provisions of the DFA. The draft Western Cape Development Planning Bill gives a bow in the direction of integrated planning but without this having any relationship to the primacy of local government plans. The draft bill infringes on the power of local government to make binding decisions concerning municipal planning. Under the Constitution certain local government powers and functions are not hierarchical in character and do not require that local government structures are accountable to provincial government. The Constitution provides for the government of South Africa to be "constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government" which are "distinctive, interdependent and interrelated". The authority of provincial governments to legislate in the area of municipal planning is limited mainly to laws aimed at monitoring and supporting municipalities and building capacity in municipalities to enable them to perform their functions. Municipalities have the right to make and administer laws for functions falling under their jurisdiction, including municipal planning.

Unlike the DFA, the draft provincial bill does not require the establishment of a tribunal, which would afford transparency and accountability to the process. On the contrary, the bill vests power with the MEC, not only to override old apartheid plans but also development plans and frameworks drawn up by democratically elected local councils. The bill therefore affords the same legitimacy to plans drawn up by apartheid planners as it does to those drawn up by democratically elected councils. It creates no decision making body other than the MEC and does not make provision for public participation in municipal planning other than by public notice and comment and objection to that notice.

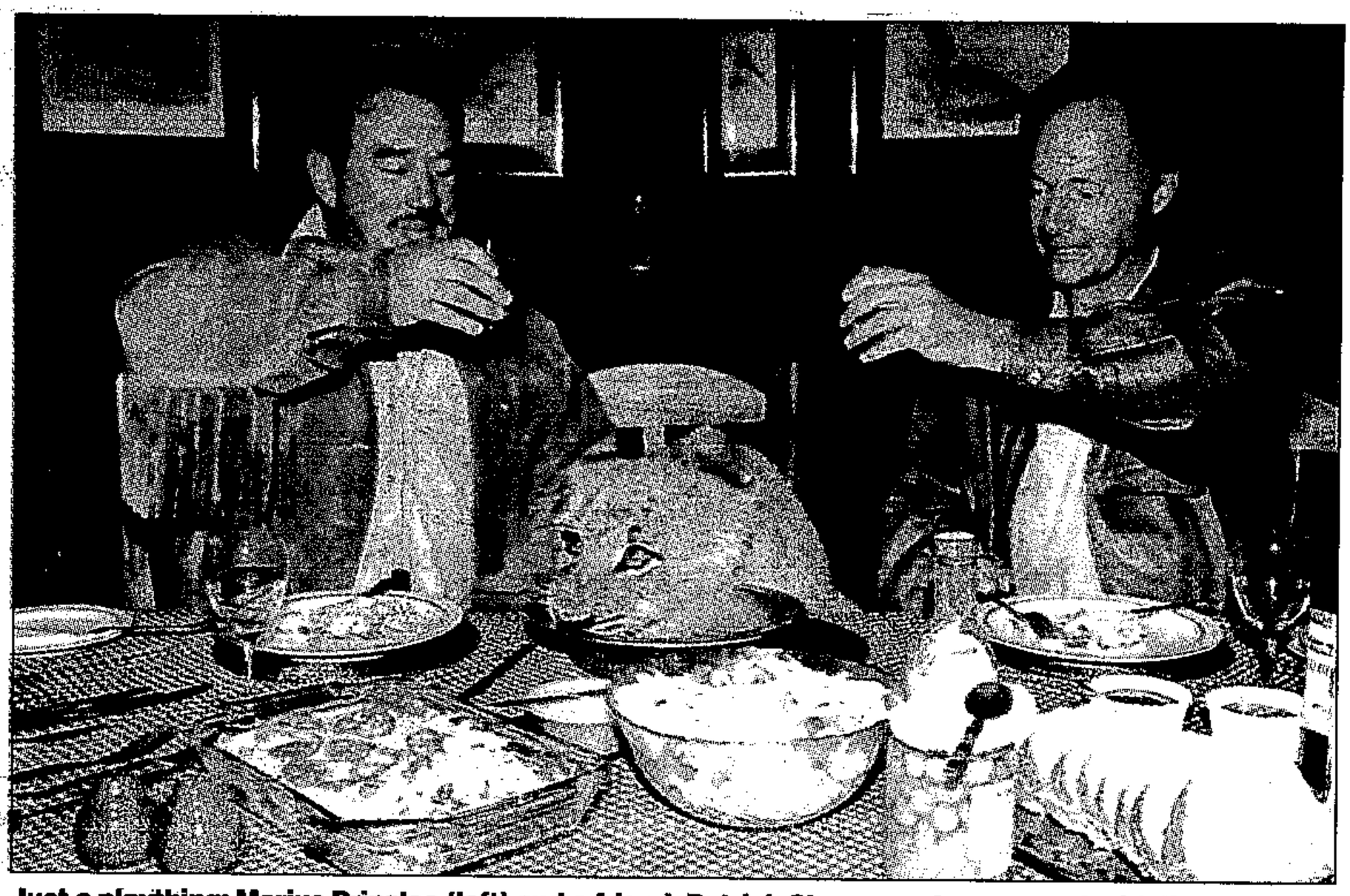
Of most concern is that the draft bill confers substantial status on apartheid structure and guide plans compiled in terms of the Land Use Planning Ordinance (LUPO) 15 of 1985 and other apartheid legislation. Various zoning schemes, including those established under the Black Community Development Act, are adopted in terms of the bill. Environmental concerns appear to be dealt with in only the vaguest references to environment work around planning.

The National Party holds up provincial government in the Western Cape as a flagship of good governance. Claims of efficient administration are celebrated while a poor record of delivery in key sectors is blamed on the national government and its fiscal disciplinary measures.

Where there are elements of good governance in the Western Cape, they are not altogether surprising. Consideration has to be given to the fact that, relative to other areas, the Western Cape has been hugely privileged in national resource allocation. Secondly and ironically, the NP has not had to grapple with the amalgamation of multiple bantustan administrations with a new provincial administration. But thirdly and most importantly, such claims of good governance should be measured against the provincial governments' commitment to transformation. Transformation that has to address itself to the terrible injustices of the past and help to rectify the inequities of the present. This should include making difficult choices to reprioritise expenditure patterns and create a spatial environment which affords opportunities to all for economic and social advancement.

By proposing that a provincial minister and not a tribunal has power to override the plans of local authorities, the NP retains for itself the ability to dispense patronage to vested interests, signalling contempt for transformation and its intention to protect privilege at the expense of a more consultative and effective process.

● Garth Strachan is a member of the provincial parliament and ANC spokesperson on development planning



Just a plaything: Marius Prinsloo (left) and a friend, Patrick Shannon, share a meal with lion cub Beethoven, one of four bought by Prinsloo in 1996. PHOTO: PATRICIA HAGEN

Shoot a lion for R25 000

Fiona Macleod

M+G 30/1–5/2/98 (56)

Eight months after *The Cook Report* blew the lid off the "canned" lion-hunting industry, a row has erupted over the hunting of a lioness near Bethlehem in the Free State.

Marius Prinsloo, owner of Camorhi farm, is advertising the eight-year-old lioness for hunting for R25 000. His lions — there are 12 on the farm — are kept in pens of one hectare. If the lioness is "hunted", she will probably be released into a larger area, though the client should be told she was bred in captivity.

Prinsloo's adverts drew a heated response this week from other big-cat breeders and from organisations which have been pressing for a review of hunting legisation since *The Cook Report*, a British TV documentary, shocked both local and international viewers with its gruesome footage of lions being baited, drugged and "hunted" in tiny enlosures.

Dr Peter Rogers, a veterinarian attached to the Hoedspruit Cheetah Project in Mpumalanga, sold four cubs to Prinsloo for R40 000 in 1996. The cheetah project is part of Kapama Game Reserve, owned by Johan Roode, a board member of the South African National Parks and a founder trustee of the Endangered Species Protection Unit.

Rogers is furious about Prinsloo's adverts. Though the lioness Prinsloo is offering as a trophy is not related to his four cubs, "this is the last thing we need right now", he says.

"My cubs were from an abandoned litter. The Prinsloos promised they would only be used for tourism, they would be kept in a big pen and they would never be resold. They seemed to be on the level."

One of the first indications Rogers had that things were not "on the level" was when, shortly after he had sold the cubs, a Pretoria newspaper featured photographs of Prinsloo sharing a meal with one of them and a friend of his sharing a bed with the same cub. Rogers threatened to take the cubs back, but was persuaded not to by Prinsloo's wife and secretary.

Prinsloo says he is selling the lioness because she has "feline herpes" and she is aggressive. He needs the money because "nobody can conserve lions without money.

"I love my lions and I don't want to shoot her, but the reality is she is costing me more than R17 000 a year to keep. All these people who tell us we shouldn't shoot our lions should give us some support, put their money where their mouths are."

Prinsloo says shooting lions in the wild is worse than shooting those bred in captivity. "And if people breed lions for hunting, it takes the pressure off the wild lion populations."

It is exactly this situation — the breeding of big cats for hunting profits — that Dillon Hale is investigating for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (Ifaw). Hale has produced a 150-page report that will form the basis of a submission to Parliament.

"We're calling for a national Act to regulate the industry," he says. "All we have now are administrative orders issued within the different provincial departments. The internal criteria are not open and freely available to the public, which is unconstitutional."

Ifaw collected 55 000 petitions protesting against "canned" lion hunting in the wake of *The Cook Report*. "But it's almost as if the reaction of the public means nothing to the politicians and the scientists," says Ifaw's Chris Styles.

"The provincial departments concerned have been tardy in getting their act together, to say the least, and the only province that has even attempted to address the issue is Mpumalanga."

CAPE TIMES
FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 1998 ★

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL MAY BE HALTED

Robberg Peninsula to become a monument

CT 30/1/98 (56)

ENVIRONMENTALISTS at Plettenberg Bay have welcomed the decision to declare the Robberg Peninsula there a national monument. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

PLETTENBERG BAY'S landmark Robberg Peninsula is to become a national monument, which could put a halt to a controversial development proposal on land adjacent to the peninsula.

National Monuments Council spokesperson Dr Janette Deacon said yesterday they had agreed in principle to the proclamation because of Robberg's historical, scientific and environmental value.

The land is already a provincial nature reserve, but the additional protection of national monument status would preclude any future development in the reserve — such as tourist lodges, restaurants or shops — without the permission of the monuments council.

Equally important, say environmentalists, is that land next to a national monument cannot be developed in a manner which interferes with the view from the monument.

This might put paid to plans to develop luxury housing on the border of the Robberg Nature Reserve, which the Plettenberg Bay council approved last year, but which they later overturned after an outcry from local residents.

But the developers, Robberg Beach End Pty Ltd, have confirmed that they intend to re-apply for development approval this year.

Residents say the housing would be a "visual disaster" and is slap-bang in a green belt, intended to act as a buffer between the built part of the town and Robberg Peninsula.

Plettenberg Bay's Wildlife and Environment Society chairman Mr Godfrey Bass said yesterday: "I'm delighted. With this additional status, it really casts the protection in stone and would provide enormous strength to our resistance to any development along the borders of the reserve.

"It would also preclude any future development within the reserve, without the monuments council's permission, and any proposals to build a harbour next to the peninsula."

Robberg Nature Reserve warden Mr Henk Nieuwoudt, said: "If you take Robberg Peninsula away from Plett, it's like taking Table Mountain away from Cape Town. We're really pleased about the prospect of getting monument status, because the reserve could do with extra protection to prevent future managers of the reserve from putting up things like shops and restaurants."

He said he hoped the status would help preserve the green belt outside the reserve, which was essential to prevent an ugly visual effect, and to allow animal and plant migration between the reserve and the nearby Brakkloof vlei.

There are about 20 archaeological sites on Robberg, including material from the early, middle and late stone ages.

The monuments council has asked Robberg Beach End developers to employ an archaeologist to survey the land they propose to develop ,to establish if there are any more archaeological sites.

Said Deacon: "It is highly sensitive archaeologically. In 1630 the Portuguese vessel, the Sao Goncalo, sank in Plettenberg Bay, leaving about 100 survivors. They camped for eight months on land, traded with the Khoi-Khoi, built a church there and two small vessels.

"Some of the survivors sailed east and reached Maputo, where they were picked up by a Portuguese ship and taken home. The others sailed west and, amazingly, were picked up by a Portuguese ship at sea, and sailed with it to the Far East and then back to Portugal.

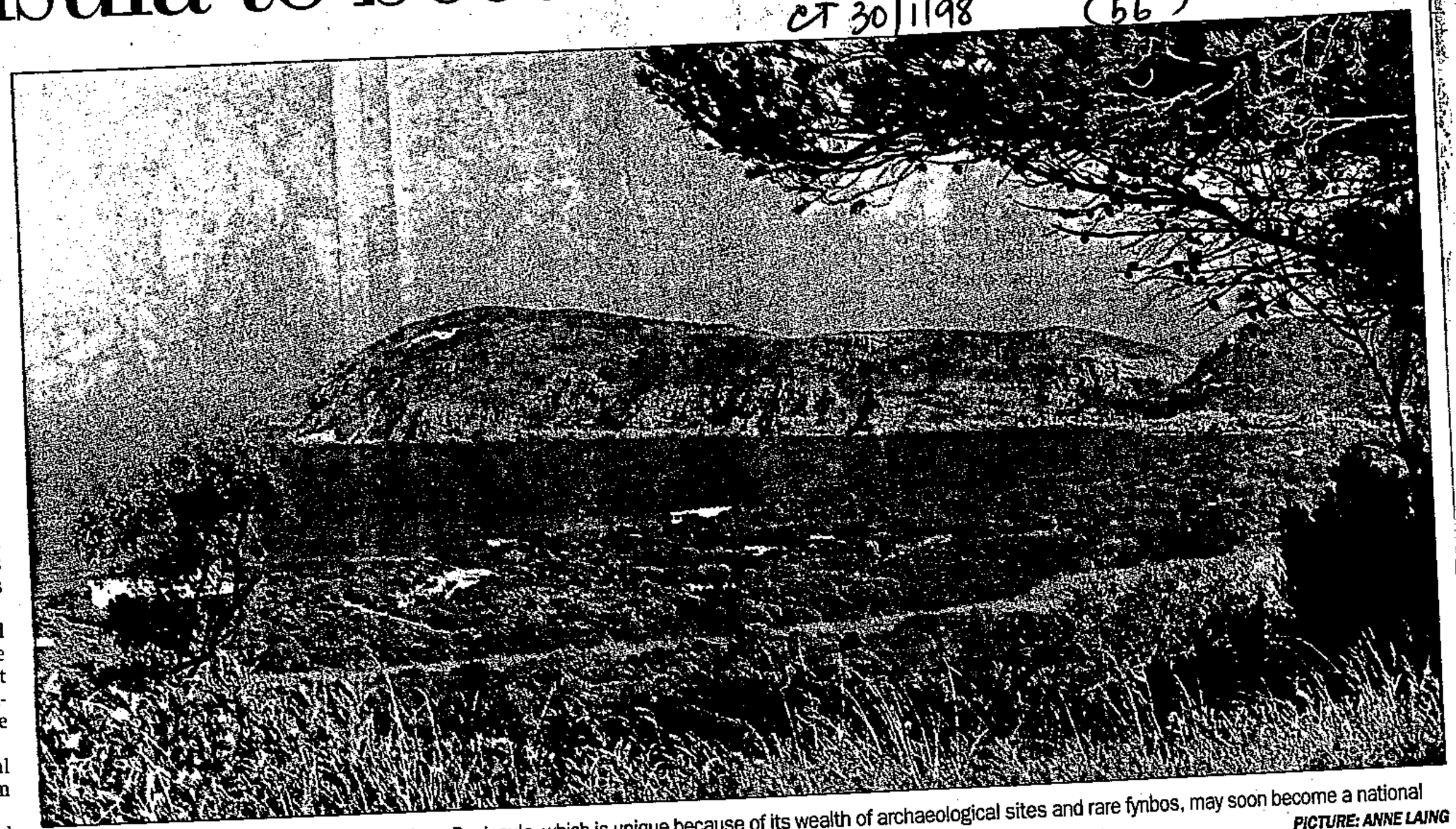
"The ship sank soon after docking in the harbour at Portugal and sadly the diary kept by a priest was lost. He wrote about his experiences from memory."

Deacon said that when a Mr Jerling built a house near Robberg in the 1970s, he had unearthed a large quantity of broken porcelain that survivors had taken ashore from the wreck. The site was excavated, in the hope that traces of the wrecked sailors' settlement would be found, but they were not. Only small items such as incense containers and a place that looked as if smithying had been carried out at the spot were unearthed.

The sailors' settlement might well be on the land abutting the Robberg Nature Reserve.

Other controversial developments that may be halted because of intervention by the National Monuments Council are:

- Housing and hotel proposals on the Arniston dunes, next to the historic fishing village, which is a national monument.
- The luxury housing development at Oudekraal, which has been provisionally declared a national monument.



TO BE PROTECTED: Plettenberg Bay's Robberg Peninsula, which is unique because of its wealth of archaeological sites and rare fynbos, may soon become a national monument, protecting it from future development. PICTURE: ANNE LAING

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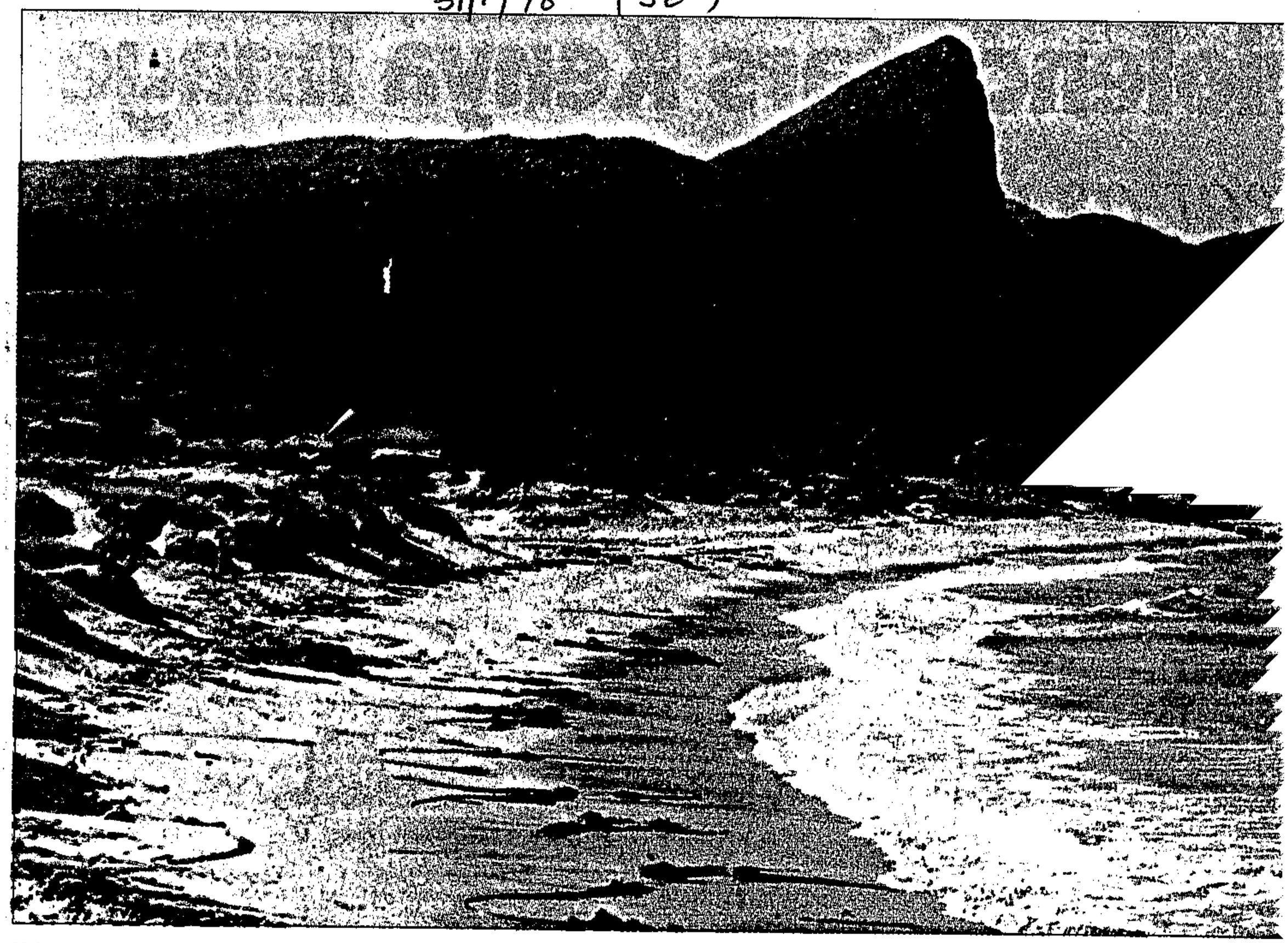


Major conservation project: R30,87-million will be used by SA National Parks to help establish the Cape Peninsula National Park. 'We would never have achieved this without teamw

A step closer to Cape

Move set to release R60-m in foreign fun

JOHN YELD

In a move that could help unlock R60-million in foreign funding, the South African National Parks expects to take operational control of the core area of the new Cape Peninsula National Park by April 1.

This will consist of key conservation areas like the Table Mountain, Silvermine and Cape of Good Hope nature reserves – formerly controlled by the South Peninsula Municipality, the Cape Town City Council and the Cape Metropolitan Council – and some smaller areas of privately owned land such as Sandy Bay and property between Red Hill and Kommetjie.

David Daitz, who is co-ordinating the establishment of the new park for SA National Parks (formerly the National Parks Board), said it would take longer to incorporate former state and provincial land – properties belonging to the Navy, the Rhodes Estate and conservation areas of Cecilia and Tokai forests – into the park as the legal process was "quite complicated, to put it mildly".

Mr Daitz said negotiations for the hand-over of the municipal land had been completed and that this agreement was now in the process of being put before the three local authorities for formal approval.

The agreement includes provision for the parks board to take operational control of their areas no earlier than February 1 and no later than April 1.

"It will be closer to April 1, because the councils have to take these decisions as formal resolutions during their monthly meetings, to make the hand-over legally binding," Mr Daitz said.

The hand-over process has been given an added urgency by the recent decision of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to make a $12,3-million (about R60,3-million) grant to SA National Parks and WWF South Africa to preserve biological diversity (the full spectrum of species) in the Cape Floristic Region, and more than half of this has been allocated to helping bring the new Cape Peninsula National Park into being.

The GEF was established in the run-up to the Earth Summit in Brazil in 1992 as a joint venture between the World Bank (which administers it), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The facility aims, among other things, to help developing countries protect their bio-diversity which, while unique to those countries, is also of global significance.

The Cape Floristic Region is one of only six in the world and is by far the richest, relative to size.

The GEF funds will be used for three major related projects:

- $6,3-million (R30,87-million) will be used by SA National Parks to help establish the Cape Peninsula National Park.
- $5-million (R24,5-million) will be deposited into the Table Mountain Fund, established by WWF SA in 199[illegible] for the future management of the mountain.

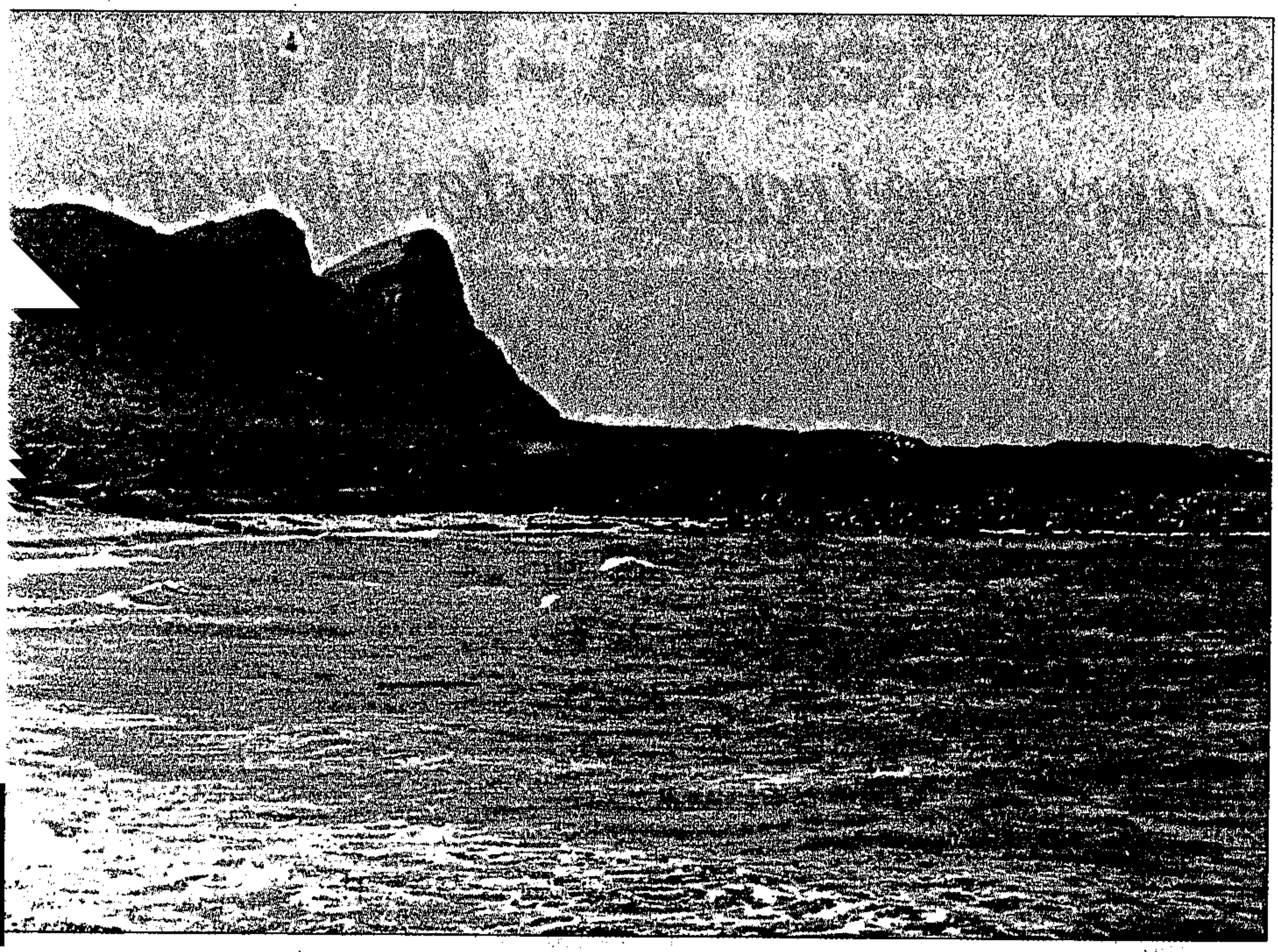
The fund was officially launched in May that year by Edmund Hillary, conqueror of Mount Everest in 195[illegible] and arguably the world's best-known mountaineer. This will bring the total amount in the fund to more than R31-million.

- $1-million (R4,9-million) will be used for a substantial survey of the most pressing conservation issues in the Cape Floristic Region.

This part of the grant was negotiated by the Institute for Plant Conservation at the University of Cape Town.

But before the World Bank will release one cent of the approved money, it has to be satisfied about what it calls "effectiveness" relating to the grant.

And for the bank to sign off on effectiveness – and thus open the account containing the $12,3-million – two conditions have to be met: a formal deed of trust for the Table Mountain Fund has to be registered and the



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ape Peninsula park

eign funding for conservation efforts

AMG 31/1/98 (56)

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"This second requirement is much more difficult than the first, but this huge amount of funding waiting in the bank has had the effect of concentrating people's minds and I'm expecting formal ratification by the councils and the signing of the agreement between them and SA National Parks to be completed before April 1," Mr Daitz said.

He pointed out that four parties had been intimately involved in the lead-up to the awarding of the GEF grant: WWF South Africa, the Table Mountain Project Team of SA National Parks, UCT's Institute for Plant Conservation and the environmental section (Africa region) of the World Bank, although there had also been wide consultation with other organisations and Government departments.

"The GEF in Washington was impressed with the quality of our proposal.

"It said it was the best-prepared application it had ever received.

"I believe this was due to the fact that it was a collaborative effort between a wide range of conservation partners.

"We would never have achieved this without teamwork. It's an exacting process to get this kind of funding. There were very difficult hurdles and we had to work very hard."

Mr Daitz said the park had been allocated $6,3-million (R30,9-million) over six years, but that most of these funds would be spent during the first three years.

Budgeted spending will be R11-million in each of the first two years – then about R7-million in the third year and R1,5-million for each of the remaining three years.

"This is very significant because the costs of getting the park going, then managing it and generating adequate cash-flow in the first few years are difficult," he explained.

"The fact that we are getting so much upfront means that we can meet our start-up costs."

In the first year as much as R7-million from the grant would be spent on invasive alien plant clearances, Mr Daitz said. In the second year the amount allocated to these activities would be slightly less and would tail off progressively in the following years.

"This is also significant because not one cent of the park board's own funds will have to be spent on alien clearing in the initial years. It gives us just the kind of kick-start we need."

Another important factor was that the conditions of the grant would compel the park's managers to introduce extremely rigorous monitoring and evaluation of how the funds were being spent, he added.

"We have to meet quite high standards and report back regularly. There are key performance criteria for agreed activities, so establishing appropriate systems will be high on our priority list."

Survey sounds green alert

15 000 South Peninsula residents quizzed

(56)

ARG 31/1/98

GRAHAM NORRIS
PROPERTY EDITOR

Environmental awareness and aesthetics are to take precedence is the message that was sent out to developers at a development function held at Noordhoek, where the findings of a survey sent to about 15 000 residents in the southern part of the Peninsula were revealed.

The survey covered Tokai, Muizenberg, Fish Hoek, Simon's Town, Sunnydale and Noordhoek and revealed a high percentage of "quality" information even though the "quantity" returned was low, as less than 5% of the total responded.

OJ Jacobs, mayor of the South Peninsula Municipality, emphasised the partnership between sustainable development and the environment and said that all projects and developments should reflect this partnership.

"If we tip the scales in either direction, we lose income due to insufficient facilities and amenities or, otherwise, we lose income as our star natural environment attraction has been over-exploited and offers little to the tourist or resident.

"In planning future projects a winning approach would be to place the environment first and to arrange the project around it. The environmental lobby will warm to it, it will have public appeal, tourists will appreciate it and the South Peninsula Municipality will endorse it."

The mayor pointed out that about 60% of the municipality consisted of mountain chain and wetlands. He said this would be a major consideration in approving new projects.

The survey indicated that Rabie was the best known development company with 64% recognition, while the De Goede Hoop Development Company had developed environmentally responsible projects, of which the best example was the De Goede Hoop Estate in Noordhoek.

The project which offered the best lifestyle and financial investment value was Johnnic's Steenberg Estate in Tokai.

Jeremy Wiley, managing director of the De Goede Hoop Development Company, said that serious consideration should be given to the establishment of an environmental compact between the development industry, the environmental lobby, the statutory authorities in the South Peninsula and the public.

Other significant findings were that 100m² plots were the most popular with 2000m² erven trailing by 4%. The category of R100 000 to R250 000 was the most popular when it came to price.

Sixty-four percent of respondents felt that residential township developments should have some form of architectural theme.

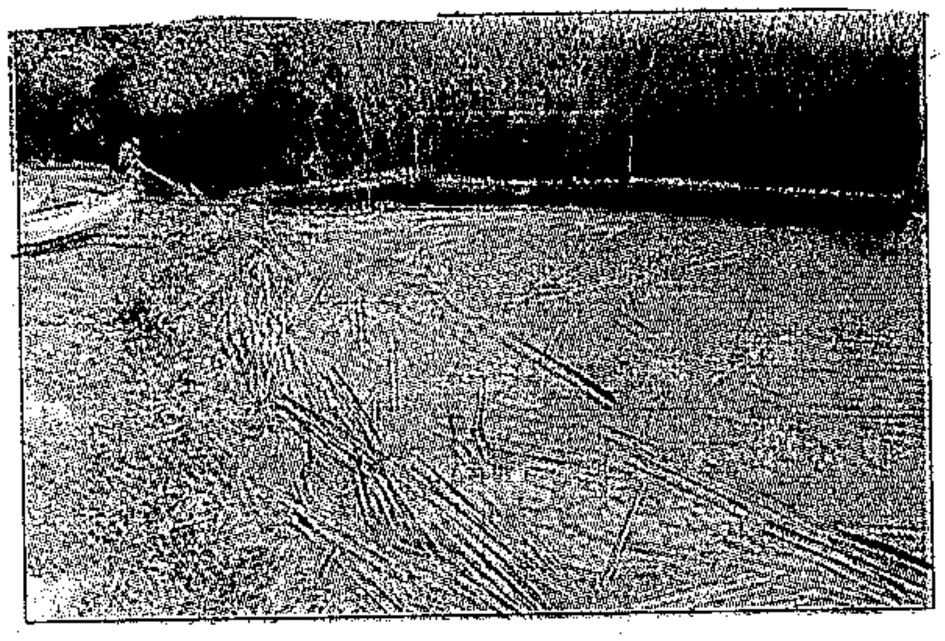
Respondents were also of the opinion that that developments should be unobtrusive, conform to environmental impact assessments and retain indigenous vegetation.

Muizenberg was highlighted with its lack of pedestrian malls and shopping combined with the strong presence of neglected buildings and "useless slumlords".

There was a call for business districts to be upgraded, old buildings to be restored and a hard line to be taken with slumlords.

Allan Philips, spokesman for the survey company, said the survey was indicative rather than scientific and showed a general trend as to the way forward for all developers.

Jeremy Wiley: environment compact plea



Smothered: blue-green algae bloom in Zeekoevlei

Billions at risk if drive to save our swamps stagnates

(56)

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

ARG 2/2/98

Contrary to belief in some quarters, wetlands are not mosquito-ridden swamplands deserving only of being filled in.

Rather, they are superbly rich ecosystems vital to the nation's environmental health and worth literally billions of rands to its economy. For example, the highly respected American journal, Nature, has calculated that the world's wetlands are worth a staggering $4,9-trillion (R24-trillion).

"It's high time such a resource economics study was carried out in South Africa," says David Lindley, co-ordinator of the Wildlife Society's Rennies Wetland Project, the only national initiative to protect and rehabilitate South Africa's wetlands.

Wetlands range from mountain springs, seeps, mires and bogs to midland marshes and flood plains, and coastal lakes, mangrove swamps and estuaries.

Their main function is regulating water: holding back flood water and releasing it slowly in drier months, thereby reducing flood damage and preventing soil erosion. They also remove pollutants from water (crucial in a dry country like South Africa, where every drop counts), serve as breeding grounds for fish and are often important recreational areas.

Mr Lindley said the project had conducted its own informal assessment of the economic worth of wetlands in South Africa.

"We realise that wetlands can save and/or earn the economy nearly R26,8-billion in disease prevention and tourism enhancement, as well as an additional R21-billion saved in drought and flood damage, conserved in fertilisers and topsoil, and earned by our fisheries," said Mr Lindley. "Wetlands are crucial to the national economy," he said.

R21-m boost for jobs in Western Cape

Heady stuff, says Asmal on success of plant-clearing project

ARG 2/2/98 (56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Efforts to reduce poverty in the Western Cape have been given a major boost with a further R21-million from the Government's Poverty Relief Fund.

The additional money, which must be spent by the end of the financial year on March 31, is being channelled through the award-winning Working for Water Programme of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, hailed as one of the jewels in the government's growth, employment and redistribution strategy.

The programme, which involves using previously unemployed people to clear "water hungry" invasive alien vegetation from water catchment areas, was chosen for the poverty relief funding because of its astounding record over the past two-and-a-half years.

By the middle of last year, more than 8 000 people had found full-time jobs on the programme and its financial allocations had all been spent on time, on budget and efficiently.

Announcing the R21-million grant at a function on the summit of Table Mountain today, Water Affairs Minister Kader Asmal said he had asked for the benefits of the extra funding to be spread as widely as possible.

As a result, another 51 projects had been initiated throughout the province. This meant that by the end of next month, more than 7 000 previously unemployed Western Cape residents would have found work through the programme.

Professor Asmal said benefits of the programme included the creation of indirect jobs, promotion of opportunities for previously marginalised groups such as women, the youth and disabled, improvements in social conditions and the reduction of crime.

Paying tribute to those involved in the programme, he said: "This is heady stuff. I salute the workers and managers. This is your success. Your delivery has earned this reward for the Western Cape."

But he also cautioned that the work of removing alien plants from the catchment areas had to be sustained. "If, for whatever reason, we fail to continue this work, these plants will come back to haunt us with a vengeance. The long-term sources of funding must be secured."

He noted that all the funds required to clear the Western Cape of invasive alien plants could be raised by increasing the cost of water by just 0,01 cents a litre.

"Please put that into perspective – it's just 1% of one cent a litre and in the process we would sustain over 10 000 jobs over a period of 20 years or more with all the resultant benefits for poverty relief and for the provision of water."

Water conservation packages such as those being applied in local authorities like Hermanus, Port Elizabeth and Plettenberg Bay provided an "attractive solution" to the problem of sustainable water supplies for most South Africans, Professor Asmal said.

Nursing Cape's wetla

Choking to death: Langevlei in Retreat literally disappeared under a carpet of weeds before rehabilitation work began

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JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Spotlight on plight of

(56) ARG 2/2/98

Today is World Wetlands Day, with international focus on the critical role that wetlands play in virtually every society around the globe.

For Capetonians, there's both good news and bad concerning their unique wetland systems that stretch across the Cape Flats.

The bad news is that nine of the major vleis in this system are all in a poor to extremely poor ecological condition.

The good news is that four major wetland rehabilitation initiatives have been launched by the Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC) in the past 12 months, and that these are already showing highly beneficial effects on water quality.

The major wetlands in the metropolitan area are Zandvlei at Muizenberg, Little Princess Vlei and Princess Vlei at Grassy Park, Zeekoevlei, Glencairn Vlei, Langevlei at Retreat, Paardevlei near Somerset West, Wildevoëlvlei near Kommetjie, and Rietvlei at Milnerton.

The 10th major wetland – Rondevlei, which adjoins Zeekoevlei – has enjoyed formal conservation status for many years, but is not without major water quality problems of its own.

Bill Harding, a wetland ecologist and head of hydrobiology in the CMC's scientific services branch, is blunt about the status of the Cape's vleis.

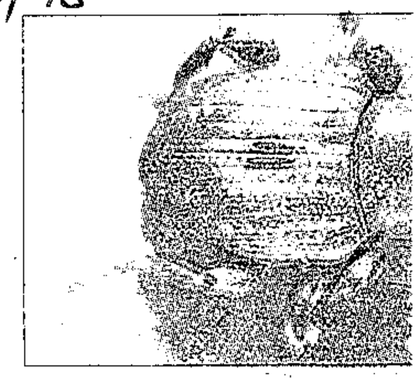
"None of them is in a good condition. All their seasonal characteristics have disappeared, and a large part of their natural functioning – such as their 'kidney' role of cleaning the water – has been lost or severely impaired," he said.

"In general, all these vleis are, ecologically, in a poor to very poor condition and have been for decades. And, if we don't do something about it, they will continue to deteriorate."

Wildevoëlvlei is probably the worst. Already suffering badly from poor water quality as a consequence of an ill-judged engineering decision years ago to pump treated waste-water effluent into it, the vlei suffered a catastrophic setback during December.

An unknown substance (unrelated to the waste-water system) entered the vlei, probably through the stormwater system, and damaged pondweed plants which help to stabilise the system ecologically. With these plants no longer performing their natural function, the balance of the vlei changed, in turn allowing toxic blue-green algae to flourish.

"That situation is going to be very difficult to correct



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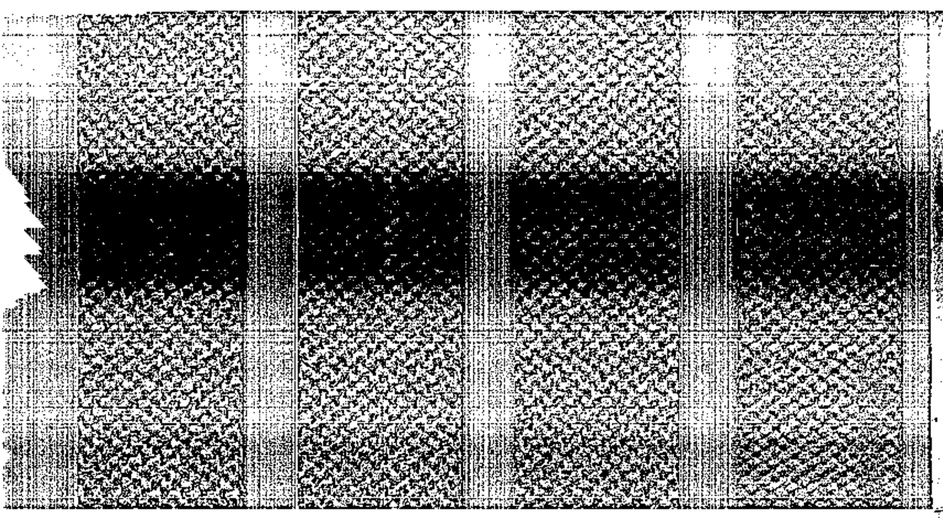

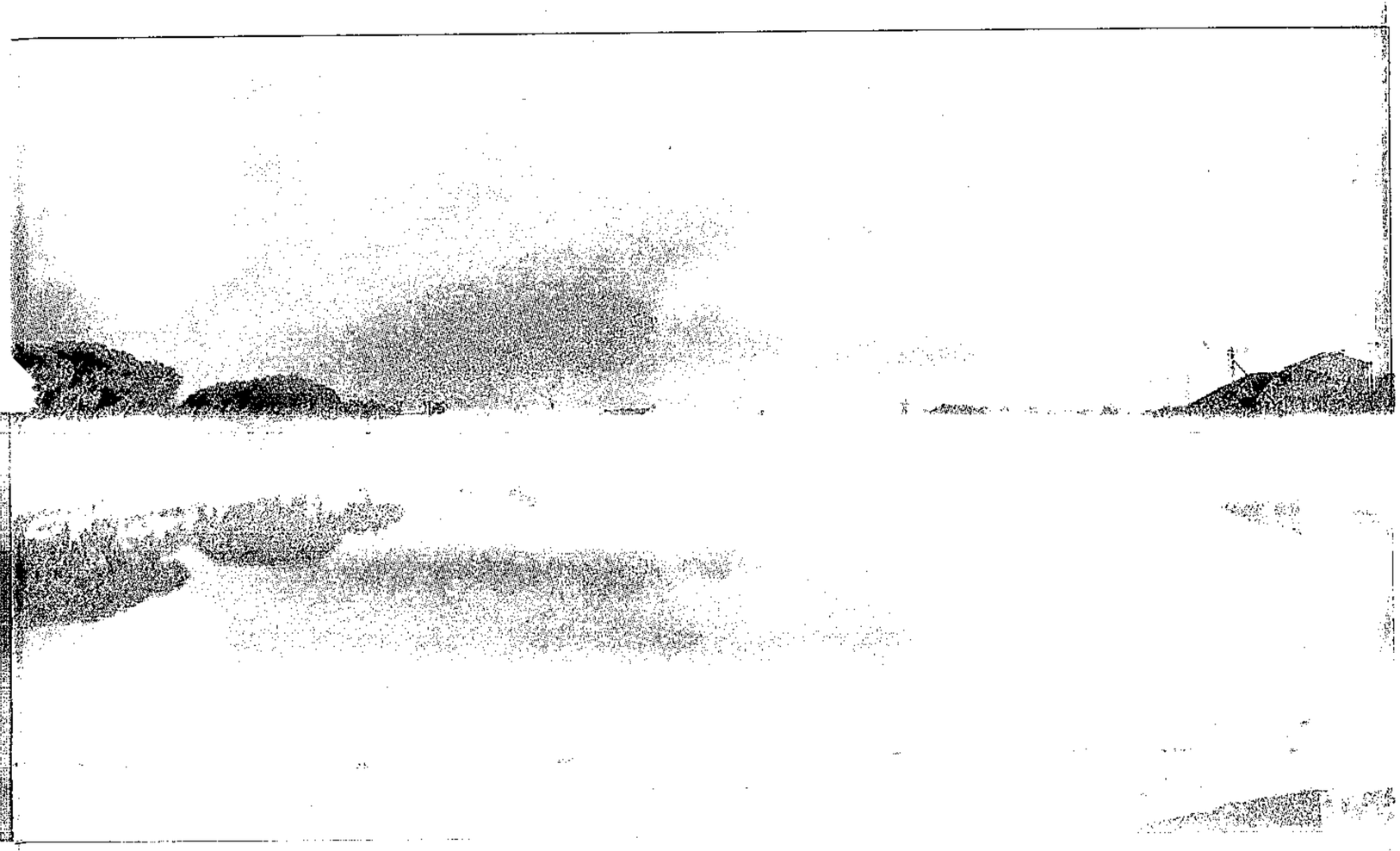

r **clean-up:** removing invasive water weeds as one of four major wetland rehabilitation projects in the Cape has restored Langevlei to its former splendour

·vorld's ailing vleis

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ɜre "stop logs" in the weir were removed for 14 weeks to lower the water level of the vlei by about 1m and flush the highly polluted system.

Dropping the water level – technically called "a drawdown" – exposed a large section of the shoreline, creating additional wildlife habitat – particularly for wading birds such as flamingoes – and allowing the removal of tons of garbage, particularly weeds like the highly invasive water hyacinth.

Weeds and algae have flourished in Zeekoevlei because high concentrations of nutrients like nitrates and phosphates have entered the vlei from the surrounding catchment areas and become trapped, because of the weir.

Zeekoevlei has been called the most eutrophic (nutrient rich) coastal lake on Earth, but it's set to lose this pariah status as the benefits of the drawdown – which will be repeated from March 27 until July 4 – are felt. "Last year's drawdown was over a short season of just 14 weeks, but already some of the trigger mechanisms for improving water quality reappeared," said Dr Harding.

"For the first time in literally decades, the water was clear enough for you to see the bottom of the vlei. I'm convinced this is going to have a knock-on effect and that the improvement in the vlei's water quality will last longer with each successive drawdown."

Zandvlei, the only functional estuary in False Bay, is an important breeding area for fish – including commercially sought-after species.

Before a rock weir was built across the mouth at Muizenberg, Zandvlei – like the other vleis – dried up completely in high summer. Illustrations exist of cattle grazing peacefully in the middle of the empty pan.

The rock weir greatly restricts the tidal flow in and out of the vlei, reducing salinity levels and damaging the wetland as a suitable habitat for hatchling fish.

"I'm convinced this is one of the reasons for the decline of fish resources in False Bay in recent years," said Dr Harding.

However, the existing weir is being replaced within the next few months with an automatic weir that will respond to tidal flows and allow near-natural migrations of fish.

"This should be a major turn-around for the Zandvlei, which partially 'crashed' ecologically in 1992 when the salinity dropped too low, and which is still not totally back to normal."

"Before these initiatives were launched, we were beating our heads against a wall," Mr Harding commented. "While there probably will still be lots of battles ahead, at least we're now seeing really meaningful changes."

SA hosts meeting to preserve wetlands

BD 2/2/98 (56)

David Greybe

CAPE TOWN — SA is to host the first international meeting on southern African wetlands in Pretoria this week.

The meeting will be opened today by Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan.

Today is also World Wetlands Day. The emphasis this year will be on the importance of wetlands in terms of water quality, quantity and regulation.

The department said at the weekend that the Ramsar southern African subregional gathering was in response to a request by African countries, at the last meeting in March 1996, for co-ordinating meetings to be organised at subregional level.

The Pretoria meeting, hosted with financial assistance from the Swiss and the US governments, follows similar subregional conferences in West and East Africa.

The department said the aims of the meeting were to provide information about the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance at national level, to identify priority actions for strengthening the application of the convention in southern Africa, and to strengthen co-operation in global wetland conservation between states in the subregion.

SA had played a leading role in the development of the Convention on Wetlands, also known as the Ramsar Convention, the department said.

"We were the fifth country world wide and the first in Africa to join the convention, and are now one of the five contracting parties to the Ramsar Convention in the Southern African Developing Countries."

The meeting was also being held as part of the South African Wetland Conservation Programme being run in order to enable SA to meet its obligations in terms of the Ramsar Convention.

SA has designated 16 sites to the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance since 1975. Jordan is expected to announce today that two more sites — the Nylsvlei Nature Reserve and the Limpopo/Luvuvhu floodplain and pans — will shortly be added to the list.

ALARM AT 'UNCONTROLLED' BUILDING

Plettenberg Bay set to double in size

(56)

CT 2/2/98

THE COUNCIL does not have a town plan and has set precedents, so it cannot turn down developments that conform to by-laws. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

PLETTENBERG BAY will be double its size when approved developments have been completed — but building applications continue to stream into the council's offices.

Residents fear this Garden Route town will be ruined by overdevelopment like Hermanus further south and Umhlanga Rocks in KwaZulu-Natal.

Plett comprises 4 900 erven, including those of six hotels. The council has approved 4 308 new housing units, the plans for which include three new hotels and three shopping centres.

These are the Twin Rivers Estate on the Anath Peninsula on the Keurbooms Rivers (40 units); Waterberry Ridge, an extension of the controversial Castleton on Plett's skyline (341 units and an 80-bedroomed hotel); Sanbonani at the mouth of the Keurbooms River (1 000) units); Heideland (350 units, including two hotels and a business centre); Whale Rock (720 units with two business centres); Keurplett (409 units) and a Metropolitan Life development (1 080 units).

Residents say the council is swayed by the prospect of jobs being created, but that contractors bring in outside labour. Once the buildings — mainly homes for the wealthy — are completed, they provide few jobs other than domestic work and many of these are seasonal.

The council says developers have rights and if an application for hotels or housing conforms to the regulations, it cannot turn it down without good reason.

"The whole thing has got out of hand," Ms Janet Holdings, of Plett Action Network, said. "People are buying up land all over the place, getting it rezoned and putting up huge developments. The council likes developers because they bring in money from rates, but at what cost?"

The founder of the Robberg Trust, Mr Peter Joffee, says a number of non-government organisations have decided to appoint a permanent paid watchdog to look at all development applications and ensure they are legal.

"We've got to police our council if we are to preserve some of the beauty of Plett," he said.

"If development like this goes on unchecked, Plett will soon make Umhlanga Rocks look like a pretty seaside town."

However, it is questionable whether a watchdog will have any effect in halting rapid and inappropriate development.

Britain and some European countries have legislation to protect scenic landscapes by restricting landowners' building choices. By contrast, in South Africa, a developer may build almost anything he wishes if he complies with the building regulations and by-laws.

Many of Plett's environmental groups have called for a halt to some of the more unsightly practices, like building on the skyline, but town clerk Mr Ken Roelofsz says this is not possible because the council has set many precedents.

"If we have allowed one developer to build on the skyline, other developers want to know why we won't allow them to do so too," he said.

The council was aware of public criticism, Roelofsz said.

"The public must understand that we've got a new South Africa. Some councillors oppose too much development, but many are in favour of it because they say it creates jobs."

Mr Peter Stratten is one councillor who worries about the way Plett is going. He says the council, in processing the "stream" of applications, has been operating without a town plan.

"There are lot of uglies in Plett, like Castleton right on the ridge, which should never have happened.

"Many of the developments in the pipeline were approved by the previous council.

"A big problem is that what developers show in artists' sketches is not always what the development looks like when it is built. The sheer impact of the buildings against the natural environment is not conveyed."

Stratten says a structure plan is being drawn up for Plettenberg Bay.

He believes this — as well as the Department of Environment Affairs' having declared the Garden Route, from Wilderness to the Bloukrans River east of Plettenberg, a sensitive coastal area — might halt inappropriate development.

A structure plan specifies appropriate land uses for different areas. However, it is not legally binding and councils do not have to stick to them.

Building in a sensitive coastal area m
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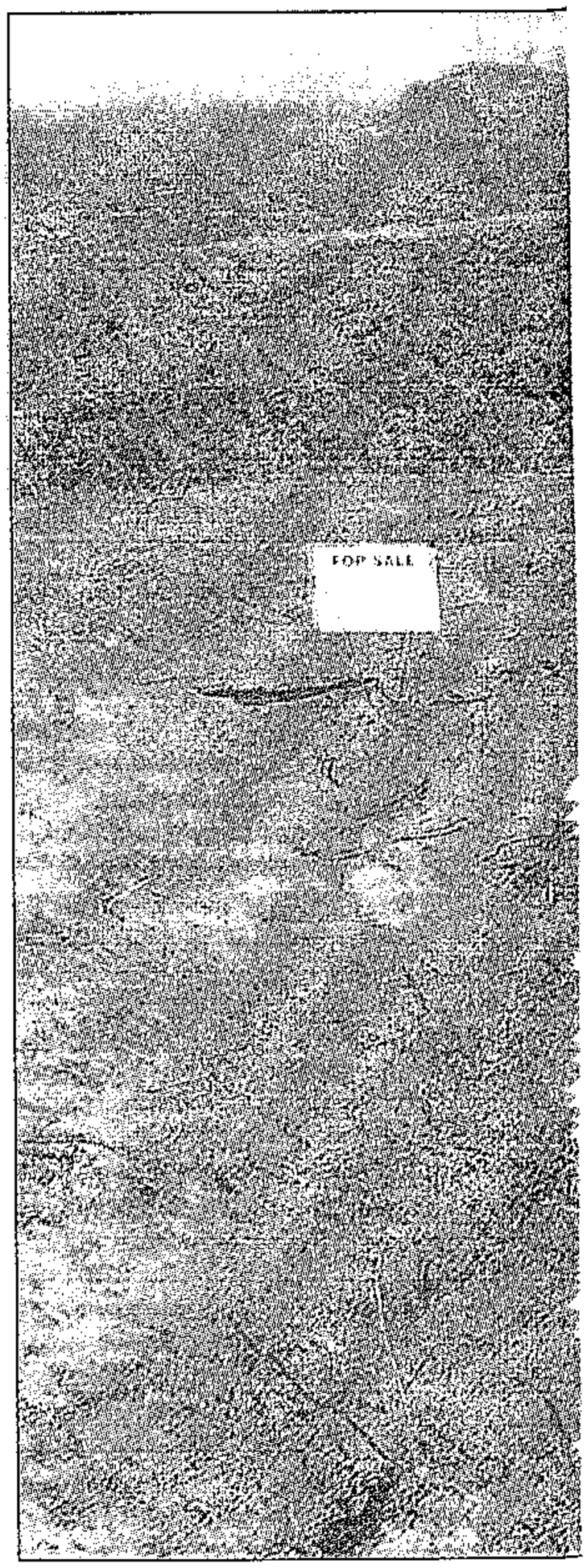

SCRAPE WITH BY-LAWS: Bulldozers had m
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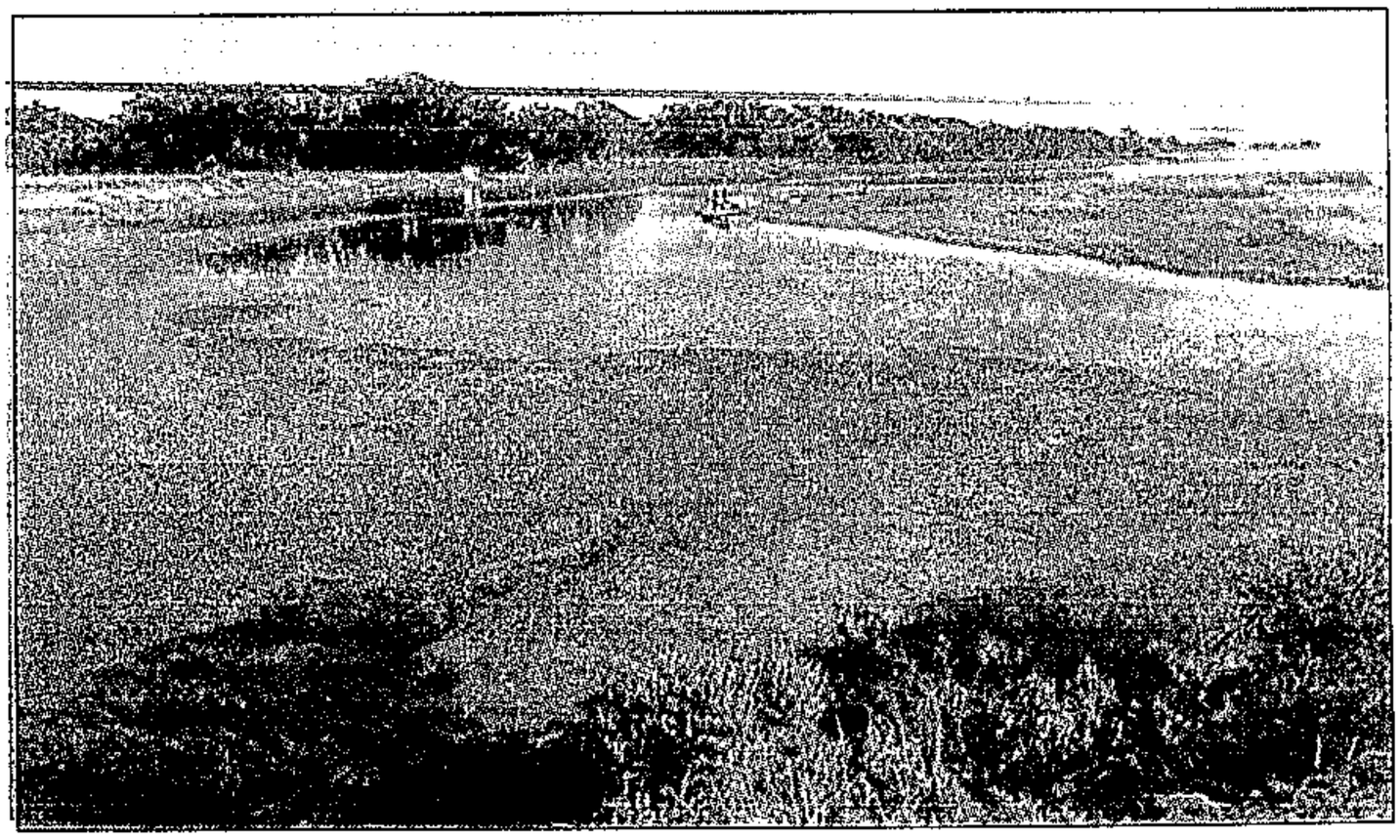
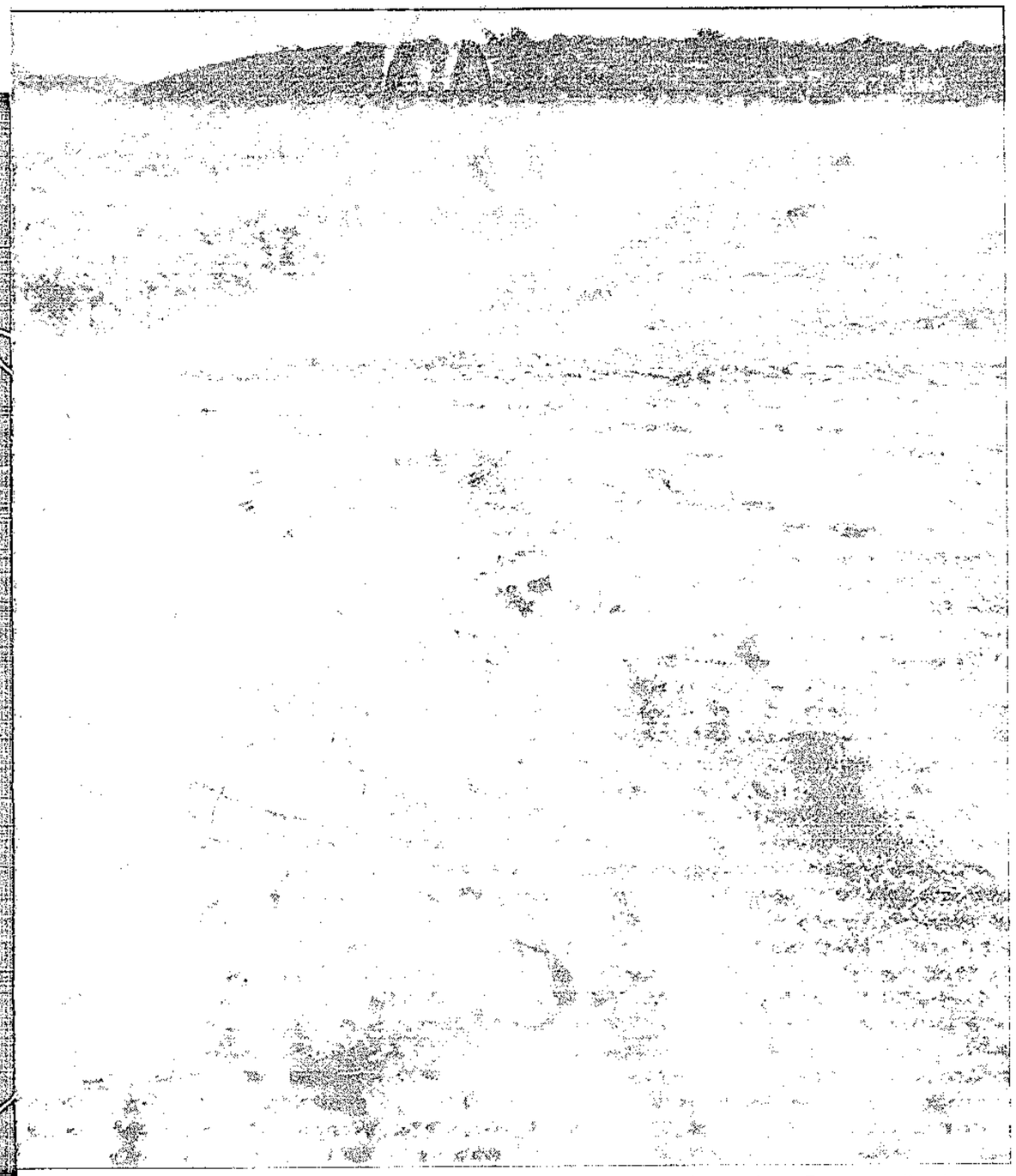


PARADISE LOST: The Keurbooms River, where 40 units are to be built, with council approval, as part of the Twin Rivers Estate. The building of 1 000 units at Sanbonani at the mouth of the river has also been approved.



...oved in and plots were on sale before the developer had applied to the Plettenberg Bay council to have ...ts fear rampant development will ruin the Garden Route town. ***PICTURES: ANNE LAING***

Developer jumps gun, faces court action

MELANIE GOSLING

THE Plett town coun... taken legal action ag... developer who stripp... vegetation from land ... he had applied to ha... property rezoned an... about 50 plots before ...ing to have it sub-divid...

Town clerk Mr Ken... ...sz said he had receive... plaints from the publi... they saw the land h... stripped almost ove... and a notice board ... advertising plots for ...Heights.

"We had not rec... ...rezoned from a gen... residential ... or to hav... divided," Rodetsz sai...

As a result, the co... instructed its atto... take legal action ag... ...mosa Heights' dev... Lacta Props 180 Pty...

He said La... ta P... agreed not to do a... marketing of the ... ment until Faster... not willing to give up th... right to sell.

...eans that a landowner will ... get a permit from the coun- ...ore flattening dunes, dredg- ...earing vegetation or under- ...g earthworks. The permit ...be issued only after an envi- ...ntal impact report had been ...eted.

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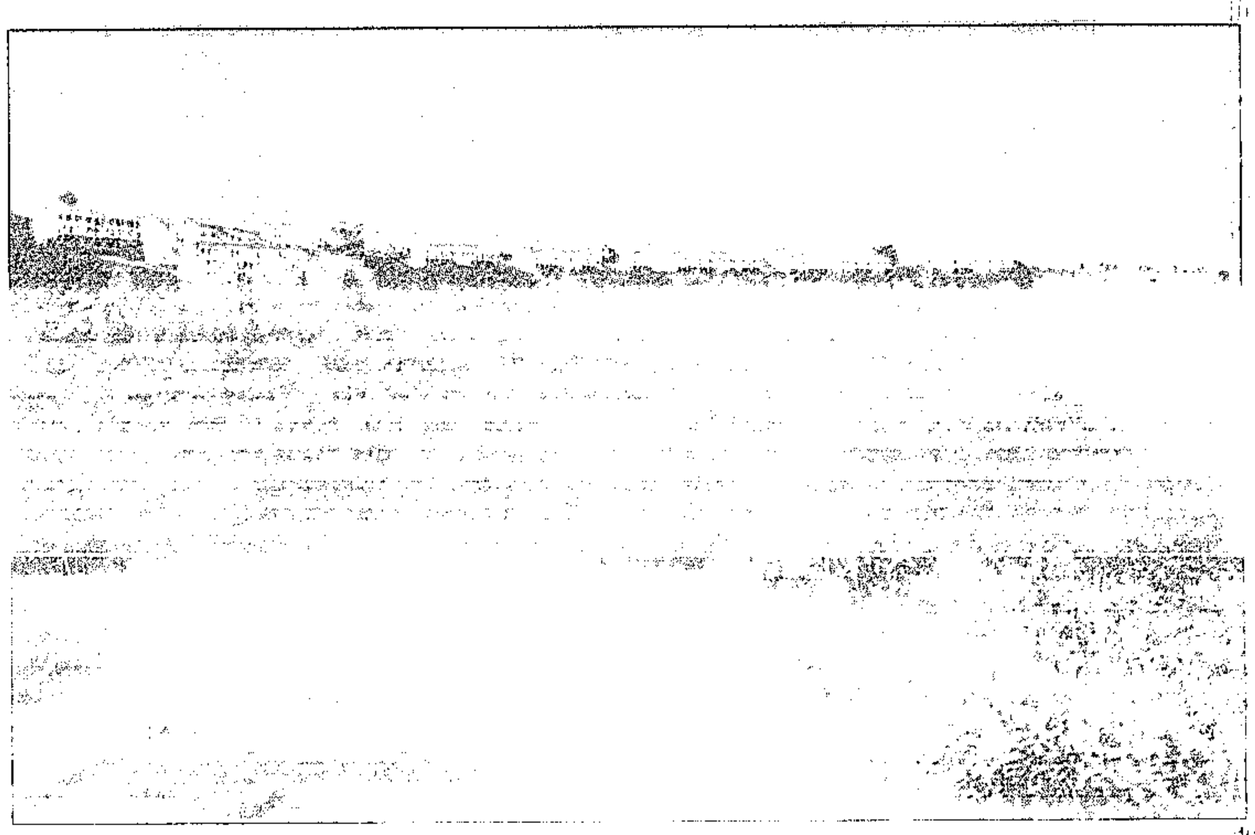


HOGGING THE HORIZON: The controversial Castleton, on Plettenberg Bay's skyline, for which some residents believe permission should not have been granted.

Wetlands protection in SA 'substandard'

BD 3/2/98

(56)

David Greybe
and Josey Ballenger

CAPE TOWN — Government was not doing enough to protect SA's wetlands or to realise their immense natural capital, estimated to be worth 10% of gross domestic product, the Wildlife and Environment Society of SA said yesterday.

Rennies Wetlands Project co-ordinator David Lindley said SA lagged behind other countries as it had neither a national wetland policy nor wetland act, nor high-ranking politicians championing its cause.

"To make matters worse, there is hardly anyone working full-time in wetland conservation," Lindley said. Rennies, a protection and rehabilitation project, runs under the auspices of the wildlife society.

Lindley estimated at least 50% of SA's wetlands had been destroyed, in line with a global trend. Mining and industrial pollution, urbanisation, dams, timber production, wetlands drainage and cropping, and overgrazing had all contributed to the loss of wetlands.

Lindley was speaking on World Wetlands Day, which coincided with SA's hosting of the first international meeting on southern African wetlands in Pretoria.

Opening the week-long Ramsar southern African subregional gathering, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan said SA had "encountered a host of problems" protecting wetlands.

The Ramsar international convention on wetlands was held for the first time in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. It also refers to the Switzerland-based body which oversees sites recognised as wetlands by the convention's 101 contracting parties.

"Even Ramsar sites have sometimes been directly under threat," Jordan said. Jordan announced SA was adding two more sites — the Limpopo/Luvuvhu floodplain and pans and the Nylsvlei Nature Reserve — to the 16 site already recognised by the Ramsar list.

Lindley said the wildlife society had carried out its own assessment "and realised that wetlands can earn/save nearly R26,85bn in disease prevention and tourism enhancement". An additional R21bn was saved in drought and flood damage, conserved in fertilisers and top soil, or earned by fisheries.

SA joins the Cairns Group

(44)

CANBERRA — SA has become a member of the Cairns Group, an international lobby group for the reform of world agricultural trade, Australia's foreign affairs and trade department said yesterday.

Department senior spokesman Nick Warner said: "We congratulate SA on the changes it has made to bring its domestic environment into line with Cairns Group objectives for international agricultural trade."

SA is the first African country to join the Cairns Group. It will be welcomed formally at a ministerial meeting in Sydney in April.

Warner said: "It will be a critical meeting for the group as it develops objectives for the next round of multilateral negotiations on agriculture in 1999, and considers strategies to advance our interests in the World Trade Organisation prior to the commencement of the negotiations." — Reuter.

BD 3/2/98

NORWICH HOLDINGS

Norwich Holdings S.A

(Incorporated in the Republic of South
(Registration number 95/10366/06
("Norwich")

FURTHER CAUTIONARY ANN

Conditional, partial offer by African Life
("African Life")

The Board of Norwich met to consider the c
African Life to the shareholders of Norwic
announced in the press on Monday, 2 Feb
unanimously decided that it will not rec
shareholders of Norwich. Shareholders are
continue to exercise caution in their dealing

More detailed information will be circulated
possible.

Cape Town
3 February 1998

CAPE ARGUS, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1998

National park 'under threat'

(56)

ARG 5/2/98

Jobs, funds in jeopardy

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Senior Cape Town municipal officials are allegedly trying to derail the new Cape Peninsula National Park, jeopardising several thousand potential jobs and more than R60-million in overseas funding.

But political support for the park from councillors of three local authorities in the Peninsula , Cape Town, South Peninsula and the Cape Metropolitan Council, is unwavering.

Their agreement to transfer key conservation land to South African National Parks, painstakingly negotiated over many months by a committee of councillors from the three municipalities, is being advertised for objections.

The agreement allows the parks board to assume control of the area no later than April 1.

The warning about the attempted derailment came from David Daitz, head of the project team co-ordinating the creation of the park for South African National Parks.

At this week's meeting of the Cape Peninsula National Park advisory committee, Mr Daitz said one of "bumps on the road" to completing the park was efforts by senior council officials he did not name to derail the process.

He told Cape Argus it was possible these officials believed the best interests of Capetonians would be served by keeping the land in council hands.

"I accept that they are acting in good faith and I am not suggesting they have sinister motives," said Mr Daitz.

But all the parties involved had negotiated the hand-over of their conservation land to the parks board in good faith and their teams had struck an agreement that was a balanced compromise.

Such good faith required that none of the parties demanded to re-open negotiations.

"And to attempt to re-look at even one aspect of the agreement in isolation from all the rest has the potential to undermine the agreement," said Mr Daitz.

City scoops HQ of world dams body

(56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

ARG 3/2/98

The headquarters of the new World Commission on Dams will be in Cape Town and South Africa's innovative water conservation programmes will feature prominently in its deliberations.

This was announced yesterday by Water Affairs and Forestry Minister Kader Asmal, the commission chairman.

Water conservation programmes to be considered by the commission include the Working for Water initiative of Professor Asmal's department, which involves using previously unemployed people to clear water-hungry invasive alien plants from vital water catchment areas.

The main backers of the commission are the World Bank and the World Conservation Union, and its mandate is to find middle ground between strongly opposing views on the construction of major dams.

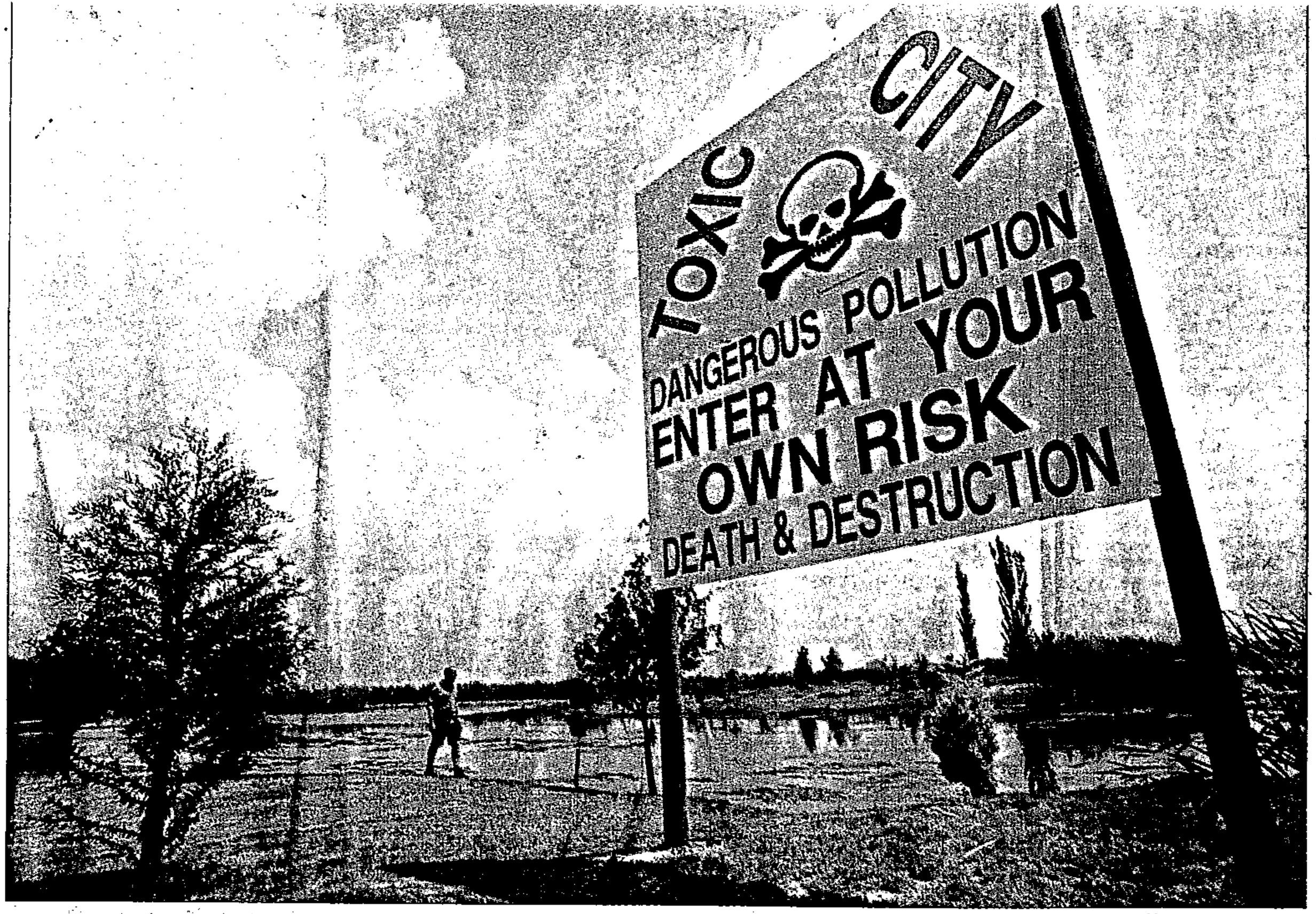
Environmentalists are deeply concerned at the ecological and social impacts of such dams but these concerns have to be weighed against potential benefits such as the availability of water and hydro-electric power.

The commission will do a two-year review of the effectiveness of dams and develop standards and guidelines for countries contemplating major dam projects.

It will also assess alternatives to building dams such as effective water conservation. Professor Asmal said: "We will be leading the world and there is no reason not to puff out our chests."

DOUG PITHEY

Home grown: Kader Asmal with environment MEC Martha Olckers, back centre, and water affairs staffers



High-risk area ... Bill Ross-Adams, a resident living on the banks of the badly contaminated Blesbokspruit, has taken it upon himself to erect a sign warning people away from the polluted waters.

Important wetland still under threat from pollution in Blesbokspruit

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

(56)

Two years after the world was shown the extent of the contamination of the Blesbokspruit, which feeds a wetland area recognised as important under the international Ramsar Convention, pollution in the area continues.

The problem has now come under the scrutiny of the Southern African Development Community. Representatives from all the member countries, with the exception of Angola, visited the area on the far East Rand yesterday to gain first-hand knowledge of the problems facing the wetland.

Thousands of litres of contaminated water is being discharged into the wetland daily from mines, sewerage works and a industries. Pollution of the water is posing a threat to the nearby Marievale bird sanctuary, also protected by the Ramsar Convention.

Although pollution levels are not high enough to cause the death of thousands of fish in the spruit, which it did in 1996, contamination is forcing wildlife to leave the area.

Bill Ross-Adams, whose property lies on the spruit, said they had initially wanted to name the area Otter City, but had changed it to Toxic City because of the pollution levels, which have chased away the otters and birdlife.

Because of the continuous water discharge into the spruit, residents living along the wetland are seeing large portions of their properties being flooded.

"For me the loss of land is not such a big issue, it is the loss of birds and other wildlife," Ross-Adams said.

Candice Haskins from Gauteng Nature Conservation said: "When the area was designated a Ramsar site there was a huge diversity of bird species. Over the years they have declined because of the reeds and the pollution. Several Red Data species have also disappeared".

Geoff Cowan, deputy director of natural environment for the Department of Environmental Affairs, said there were plans to get all the stakeholders together to manage the entire system.

They are also hoping to come up with control measures and cleaning and maintenance operations that are needed to clear the spruit.

Star 6/2/98

MEC warns of developments

(56) CT 6/2/98

CONTROVERSIAL developments such as the incomplete White House Hotel at Oudekraal — a visual blight on the slopes of the Twelve Apostles — have the capacity to ruin tourism for the province.

Newly appointed Western Cape Tourism, Trade and Industry MEC Mr Hennie Bester said developments such as the White House Hotel and the proposed developments at Oudekraal and Knysna could drive tourists away.

It was precisely the Western Cape's largely unspoilt and unique natural assets which attracted tourists to the province in the first place, he said.

"The environment is our key asset. And I am afraid that a lot of new development that is taking place is not sensitive towards this asset which is attracting people here."

Bester said developments in the province required an "inter-disciplinary approach" — preferably from the planning stage.

He said the Western Cape government now had a "key role to play" in pointing out the "broad direction" in which tourism in the Western Cape should develop.

"I think there has been a lot of thinking in this regard, but it has never been coherently drawn together. The Western Cape Tourism Board has a policy development function, but I certainly think the minister has a leadership function in this regard.

"Also, I have to play a sort of facilitator role because it is not only provincial government which is involved in tourism. There are also national and local government.

"The other challenge is for us to grow tourism. More tourists must come to the Western Cape. That will be one of the best ways to include communities which have been unable to participate fully in what has been a very capital-intensive industry.

"Tourism is an ideal vehicle for job-creation and I'd like to push that because I think job-creation is a top priority."

Bester said service in the city's tourism establishments had improved, but he warned that much of Cape Town had yet to develop a tourism culture. "There is a big difference between tolerating visitors and seeing them as a major asset for your community." — Tourism Writer

4x4s rumble through the oystercatcher's breeding area

(56) ARG 7/2/98

ADELE BALETA

The beach hogs in their powerful 4x4 vehicles that churn up sensitive beaches, are threatening South Africa's rarest coastal bird – the African black oystercatcher.

The threat comes from the 4x4 brigade taking part in angling competitions near Mossel Bay.

Residents and conservationists have accused the Southern Cape District Council of failing to enforce laws banning off-road vehicles from vulnerable coastlines. The 16km area, from Boggomsbaai to Dana Bay, is a breeding ground for the birds and the precious eggs and chicks are no match for the powerful vehicles.

There are only 5 000 oystercatchers in the world, 75% of which inhabit South Africa's coastline. An Austrian tourist, Helmut Dohnal, visiting the area during an angling competition last March, complained in a letter to the SA Tourism Board about the "festival of drunken people" whose only goal was to "destroy" as much of this "Garden of Eden" as possible.

Mr Dohnal said the "sportsmen" were driving around "killing all the small mussels and "decorating" the beach with shark carcasses, empty beer bottles and plastic buckets.

Residents and conservationists say the Southern Cape District Council has also ignored provisions governing permits controlling access of vehicles onto beaches.

They accuse the council of breaching conservation guidelines on when the breeding season starts and ends.

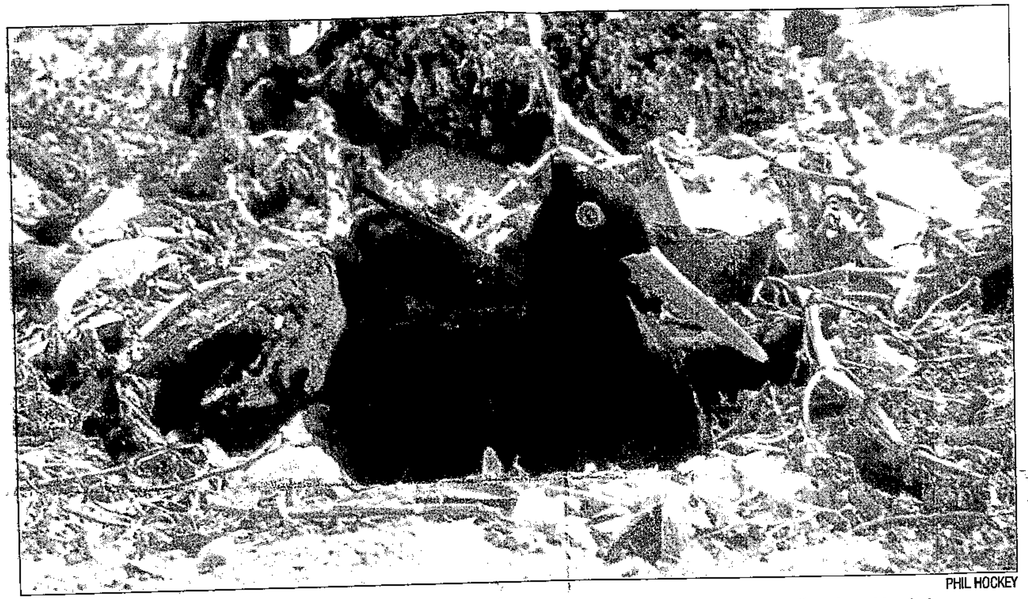
But according to the council's chief executive officer, Earle Loxton, the council, which issues permits to angling clubs in the area, is waiting for the outcome of a major court case before making a final decision about the area.

In a sequel to a six-year battle, the Western Cape environmental ministry is taking the Overberg District Council to court for not banning vehicles from the sensitive beach between Brandfontein and Suiderstrand, west of Cape Agulhas.

The case is due to be heard later this year.

It is the first time a provincial government is taking a regional authority to court and conservationists are regarding it as a test case that will send out a warning to other local authorities to enforce the law.

However, there are fears that if the Overberg District Council wins the case it could set a precedent for local authorities, who may not be conservationists at heart, making crucial decisions affecting the environment.



PHIL HOCKEY

Endangered: South Africa's rarest coastal bird – the African black oystercatcher. Its breeding grounds are threatened by 4x4s

Fred Orban, respresenting residents, said a major angling competition in which about 35 vehicles were given permits was held on the stretch of beach between Dana Bay and Boggomsbaai on January 29 this year, in contravention of guidelines governing the breeding season of the black oystercatcher. The beach is meant to be off-limits to vehicles btween September and February.

Mr Orban said residents had battled for years to persuade the council the beach was of exceptional wilderness quality and vehicles should be completely banned from the area.

The council, he said, under pressure from angling clubs, had requested a report from a coastal preservation expert Professor Anton MacLachlan, formerly of Port Elizabeth University, to point out sections of beach that could be used by off-road vehicles for recreation.

In his 1995 report Professor MacLachlan, who has done extensive research on the oystercatchers in the Eastern Cape, said that in theory, no beach should be open to vehicles.

But he nevertheless recommended that the controversial stretch of beach could be open to vehicles with permits for eight months of the year (February to September).

This would avoid the oystercatcher's breeding season. He further suggested that this beach be monitored and the matter reviewed in five years.

But recent research showed the breeding season in the southern cape was later than in the eastern Cape.

University of Cape Town ornithologist Phil Hockey said if there was to be controlled access to the area then fishing should not be allowed at least until the end of March. "For the least impact the best time would be allowing permits for the end of May to the beginning of August."

He said the breeding rate of oystercatchers had gone up in areas like De Hoop where beaches had been closed to vehicles.

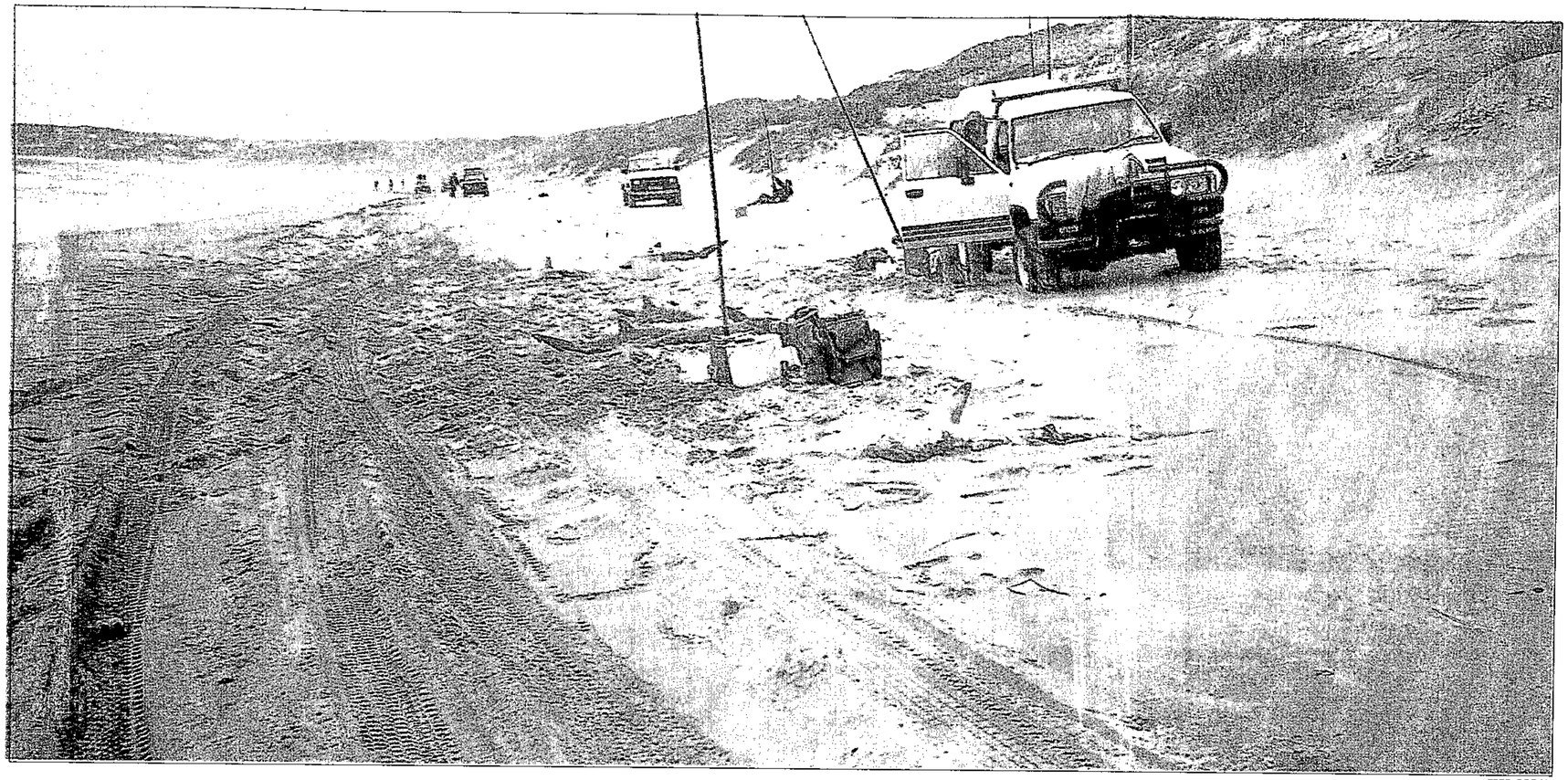
Mr Orban said the council had not policed the area or consulted with the community in terms of provisions laid done for the issuing of permits.

But Mr Loxton said there had been consultations with the relevant groups. He said the national angling event that took place on January 30 to 31 fell within the safety margin.

"The 1st of February has a built in safety margin and 48 hours this side or that side of the date cannot have a detrimental effect on the breeding pattern of the Oystercatcher."

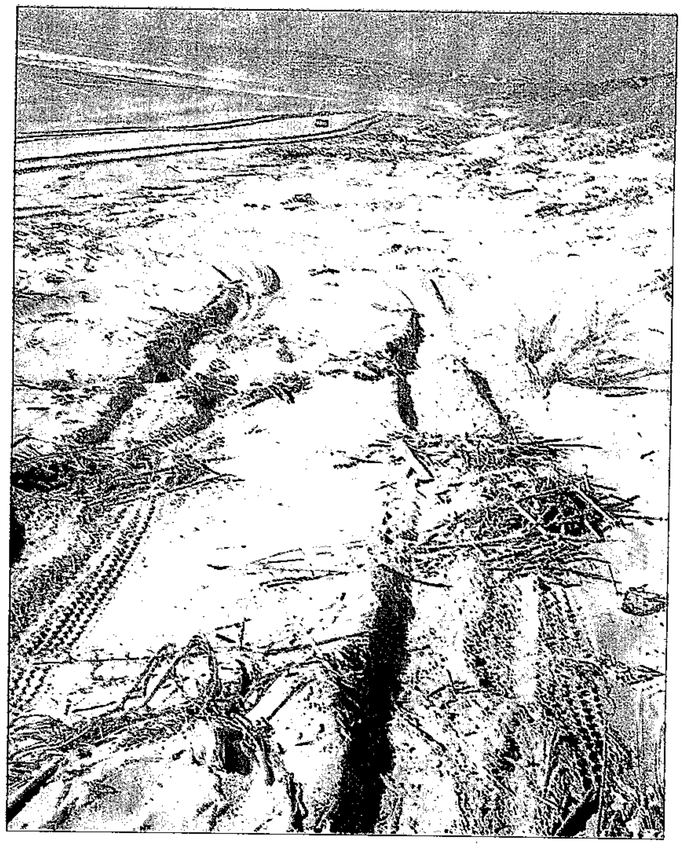
He said there were not enough resources to police beaches but he said the "angling crowd were responsible and did their utmost to keep damage to a minimum".

Chairman of the South Cape Angling Union Andre Grundlingh denied that anglers behaved like beach hogs, littering and destroying the environment. The dates for this year's competition had been set down months ago and council had agreed to give club members a permit. Mr Grundlingh said that 4x4 owners never drove above the high water mark and kept the beaches cleaner and in better condition than most beaches are kept in Cape Town. He said as far as he was aware only one individual – Mr Orban – was opposed to vehicles on the beach.



FRED ORBAN

Uproar: residents and conservationists have accused the Southern Cape District Council of failing to enforce laws banning off-road vehicles from vulnerable coastlines. The powerful vehicles churn up sensitive dune areas



Churned up: stretches of coastline after being ravaged by off-road vehicles

Beach hogs threaten birds' survival

SANPARK MAY shift its focus from the parks themselves to their visitors, says one of the body's new directors. Tourism Writer **DAN SIMON** reports.

TOWARDS the end of the last century, pressure was put on the government of the Transvaal Republic to declare a conservation area in what is today Mpumalanga.

On March 26, 1898, the Volksraad, under President Paul Kruger, passed a law to protect the rapidly vanishing wildlife by decreeing the area between the Crocodile and Sabi rivers as the Sabi Game Reserve.

The move was to be the catalyst for conservation in South Africa and the beginning of what was eventually to become the Kruger National Park — one of Africa's largest and now one of the world's oldest game reserves.

This year the Kruger National Park celebrates 100 years of conservation. And to mark the historic occasion, a new centenary logo for South Africa's flagship game reserve will be unveiled at Skukuza on March 26.

But despite its long and successful history in conservation, South African National Parks (SanPark), which oversees South Africa's eight national parks, including the Kruger Park, will be reassessing its commercial potential with a view to improving earnings.

Last month, SanPark appointed three new directors as part of its restructuring and transformation drive — a process now nearing completion.

One director, Mr Richard Willys, is a chartered accountant with extensive experience in marketing and finance.

His role in developing Madikwe Game Reserve (in North West Province) exposed him to the commercialisation of national parks and as such, his responsibilities in SanPark will entail overseeing the commercialisation of its tourism and service sector to "enhance profitability".

Of the one million visitors to the park last year, 50% were day visitors and 50% were accommodation visitors. Of the latter figure, 20% (200 000) were foreign tourists.

The two-million-hectare park with its 2 500km road network, directly and indirectly supports about 25 000 people inside and outside the park.

Its existence plays an indispensable role in the Mpumalanga economy by supporting an entire satellite tourism industry from exclusive game lodges, huge timeshare complexes and guest houses, to farm stalls, craft markets and many other small businesses.

But despite this financial impact, it appears the Kruger National Park is short-changing itself when it comes to generating revenue.

The Kruger Park and the Tsitsikamma National Park are the only two financially viable parks in SanPark's portfolio.

The other six, the Kalahari Gemsbok, Golden Gate, West Coast, Richtersveld, Bontebok, Karoo and Wilderness national parks, operate at a loss.

But this is not necessarily a bad thing: the Kruger Park generates enough revenue to subsidise them, which in turn allows these parks to remain to a degree unspoiled wilderness areas.

But if eco-tourism is the big money-spinner of the moment, how does SanPark plan to turn the fortunes of these loss-making parks around and increase the revenue generated by the popular Kruger Park?

Willys said: "Although they are not (financially) viable, they should be. We are dealing here with a legacy where parks were created for conservation and not much thought was given to the visitor.

"The National Parks Board of old said this is what a park should be and this is what they should have. They didn't listen to the visitor.

"But there is a growing belief that things must change. Now we must create the realisation that we do have visitors and that we must look after them."

Willys said it was perhaps a good thing that not the same type of utilisation pressures were placed on the loss-making parks as they were on Kruger.

"There is a social and moral responsibility to create national parks such as the West Coast and Richtersveld.

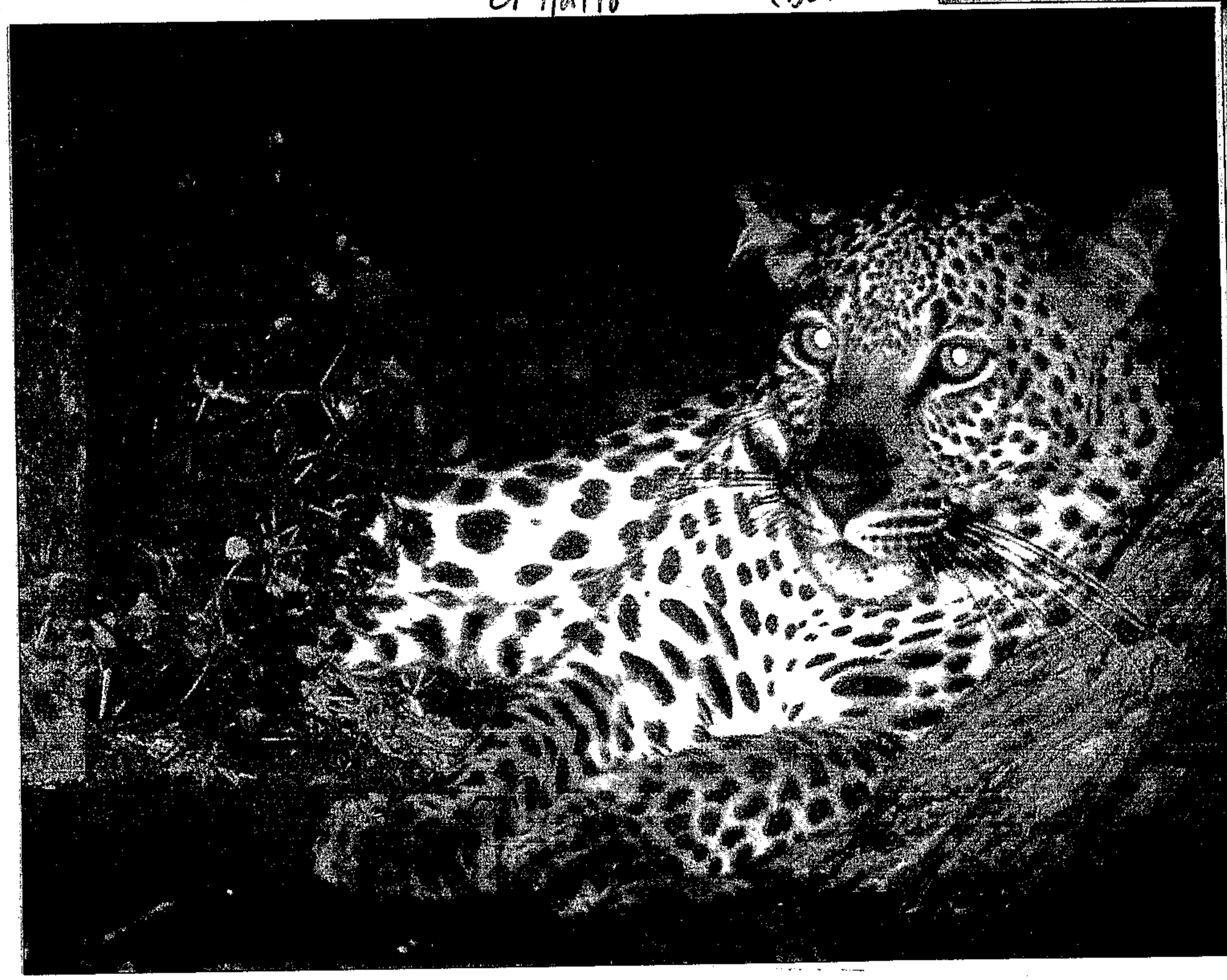
"Richtersveld is a true wilderness area and we must market it as such. I believe there will be more and more demand to visit true wilderness areas to breathe fresh air, as urbanisation increases.

ONE OF BIG FIVE: A lion in SA's largest game park. *PICTURE: LEE STILL*

'WE MUST LOOK AFTER THE VISITOR'

Parks eye privatisation in bid to raise profitability

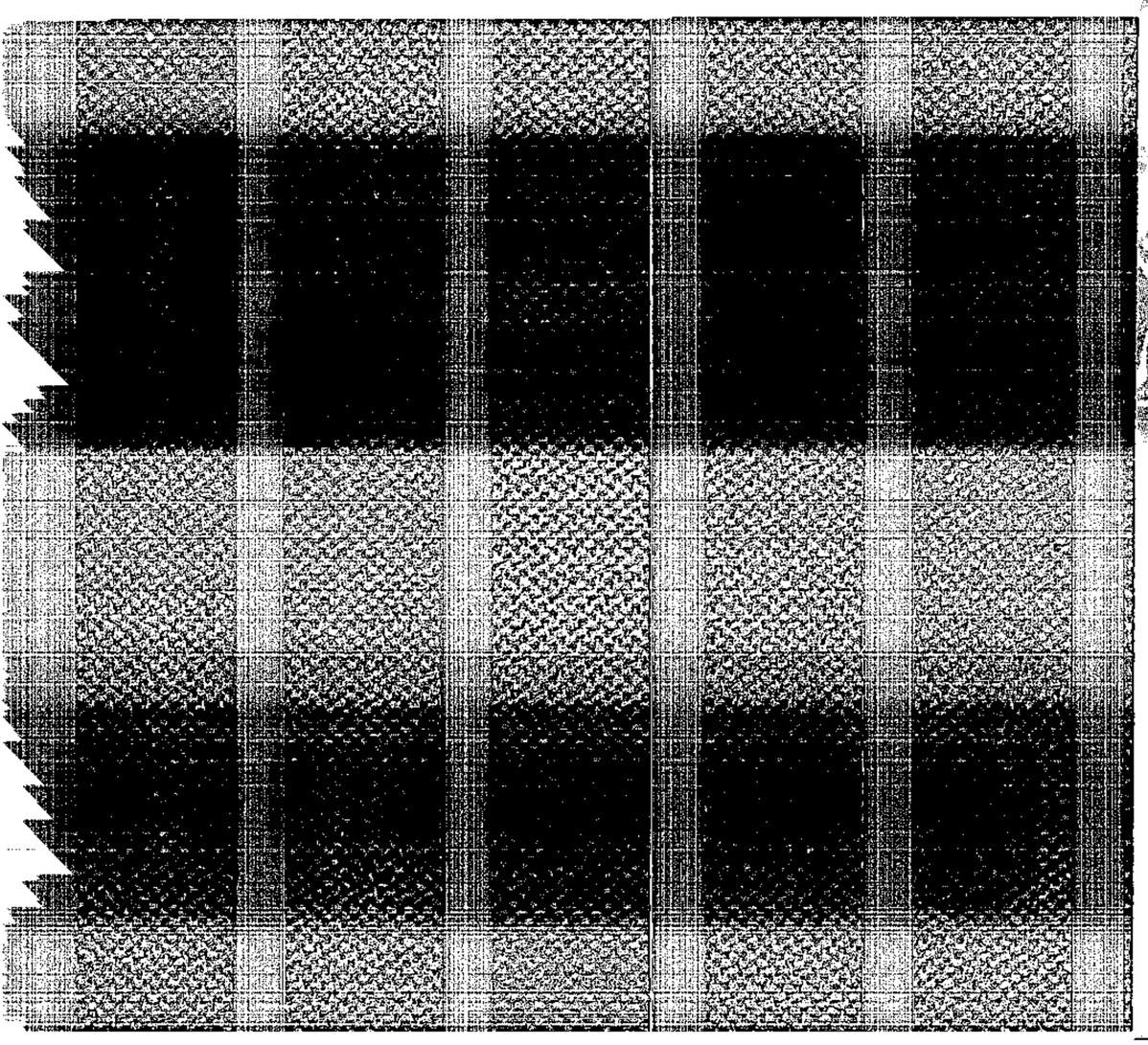
CT 9/2/98 (56)



SPOTTED: A leopard at night, one of the attractions for the half million visitors who stay in the Kruger Park each year. *PICTURE: LEE STILL*

"They don't seem to be parks that pay but there is an element of cross-subsidisation where Kruger helps generate the money which helps subsidise the others.

"If you put Kruger in one pot



ROOM TO ROAM: Animals in the Kruger Park have almost two million hectares of space. ***PICTURE: GARTH STEAD***

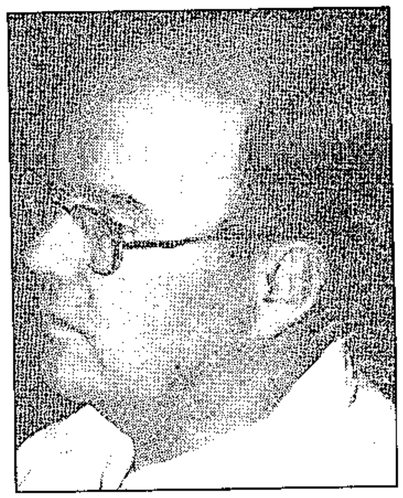
and all the others in another, then they generate about the same amount of revenue."

On the other hand, Willys said, Kruger National Park should be generating far more revenue than it does. What exactly the park earned now was difficult to say because of the cost accounting system in use. Privatisation here, he said, was a serious option.

Bearing the figures in mind, is there a danger that the Kruger Park could become over-used? Is SanPark not perhaps forfeiting a unique wilderness area in favour of the tourist dollar?

"The Kruger Park should be generating hundreds of millions of rand, but it doesn't. This is also because of a legacy we have inherited," Willys said.

"Kruger is two million hectares in size and has 2 500km of road. We let many people into the park, mainly day visitors, who don't give anything to the park. We think accommodation visitors should be given preference as they contribute more to the park.



APPOINTED: Richard Willys is one of three new directors.

"The road to hectare ratio is very low. Vast parts of the park have no roads. There are very large areas with low density and low impact.

"There is going to be a shift in the long term from the Skukuza-type camps to visitor-oriented experiences such as walking trails and canoeing trips.

"I am a product manager. In the past it was basically unheard of to to create a product and then create a market for it.

"But we will have to be focused. SanPark is very good at doing things. It can take a piece of ground and develop it and call it a park. What they don't recognise is that the visitor is part of the park. They don't know how to look after the visitor."

Willys said that as a possible start to the privatisation, SanPark's extensive laundry service, which is run within the Kruger Park, could be shifted outside to the local community.

"We're good at establishing and running game parks but we're not good at running restaurants. Privatisation here is also a serious option.

"But any privatisation would be a joint venture between the SanPark, the community and the private sector."

MtG 9-15/2/1/98

Land claim threatens rare forest wilderness

(56)

Nicky Barker

Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry Kader Asmal applied this week for a court order to evict a community illegally living in a proclaimed wilderness area in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

The land in question is the Ntendeka Wilderness Area in Ngome Forest, 5 230ha of mixed coastal forest 70km east of Vryheid. It is home to the only protected piece of this rare forest type in the world, as well as a number of endemic species.

Two years ago the reserve was the subject of a land claim, as a small portion of the original Buthelezi tribe had been moved from the area in 1966 to allow the reserve to achieve protected status. Former residents applied to the Land Claims Commission to have the land restored to them. In consultation with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, King Goodwill Zwelithini and the leader of the Buthelezi tribe, they agreed on alternative land for settlement.

The Department of Land Affairs supplied the families with tents to live in on serviced land adjacent to the reserve while the community leaders chose a suitable alternative. Taxpayers' money was set aside to buy four contiguous farms.

However, in November last year, the community of approximately 900 people informed the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry that they no longer wished to move, and that they wanted to continue to inhabit the forest. Without waiting for a response from the department, they began tearing down fences and preparing to build a permanent settlement.

This move has caused alarm among conservation groups, as the reserve enjoys the highest conservation status possible according to international law. Says Keith Cooper, executive chair of the Wildlife Society of South Africa: "We are concerned about the integrity of the wilderness area. Neither the department of forestry nor the department of environment has made any moves to stop this illegal land invasion, and we are afraid this will set a dangerous precedent."

According to one of the community members, 13 families are keen to move to their new sites but they are being intimidated to stay by a newly appointed community leader. He hinted that the about-face by the new community leadership concealed a political agenda. In meetings, the leaders have been unable to furnish valid reasons for their change of attitude.

Whatever the motive for reneging on long-term and recorded decisions, the community is in violation of the law. The Department of Forestry and Water Affairs has been severely criticised for being too lenient with the community, and for taking too long in getting the matter settled.

A wildlife official commented: "The irony here is that [Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism] Pallo Jordan was able to halt a developer from destroying the habitat of the Brenton Blue butterfly, a species found only near Knysna. But here is an entire ecosystem in danger of being ploughed up, and he allows it."

Sulphur at AECI to be moved

ARG 10/2/98

(56)

NORMAN JOSEPH
STAFF REPORTER

The last 8 000 tons of the killer sulphur stockpile at the AECI plant in Somerset West is to be moved.

The sulphur caught fire in 1995, Macassar had to be evacuated and two asthmatics died.

Last year Rossing Uranium of Namibia, which bought the chemical from the Department of Trade and Industry, removed 8 500 tons of pure sulphur and the department agreed to share the balance free of charge among Swartland farmers.

A brief hiccup this week was the blending of the sulphur with sand according to the farmers' specifications.

AECI spokesman Cyril Mathyse said that farmers would be able to use the chemical, once it was blended down to about 20% of its strength, to control sulphur deficiencies in the soil on their farms.

New law 'will devalue petrol stations'

CT (BR) 11/2/98 (56)

ADELE SHEVEL

Johannesburg — New eco-legislation calling for an environmental audit of new property developments would reduce the value of thousands of petrol stations and fuel storage sites around the country, Peter Meakin, a valuer at Holland Real Estate, said yesterday.

Meakin said over 50 percent of all sites had confirmed leak histories, according to a 1996 survey by the Oil Industry Corrosion Control Group of 206 service station sites in South Africa. This survey pointed to soil pollution on a massive scale. Meakin said contamination was even more prevalent in private refuelling sites.

Under the new legislation, a contaminated site would have to receive a clearance certificate before it could be developed. "Because such decontamination is extremely expensive, it must naturally have a hugely negative impact on the value of the property," said Meakin.

The value of the property would be reduced by the amount of money needed to make the assessments and adjustments.

Meakin said oil contamination could easily permeate across boundaries, particularly if the storage site was an old one.

While the oil industry had recently drawn up more stringent controls governing the installation of underground storage tanks, it was in the older installations where the damage had already been done, he said.

"As valuers we now have a situation where, for example, (if) we are asked to conduct a valuation of a property for bond purposes, we have to take cognisance of the risk of possible contamination and the cost of cleaning it up.

"Banks are now asking us, 'Do we have a hidden risk on the property?'. A responsible valuer will have to qualify the possibility".

Meakin said a buyer of such a site should insist on a decontamination clause or make allowances for such an eventuality. He said environmental liability was as much a cost to a developer as were professional fees.

Meakin blamed "shoddy environmental legislation from the past" for the oil pollution at storage sites.

Ritchie Morris, a hydro-geologist, said a property which was severely affected over the years by oil and solvents could cost as much as R250 000 for a site assessment and "probably millions to decontaminate".

Race for park goes down to the wire

(56)

ARG 12/2/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The Cape Town municipality is "100 percent" committed to the new Cape Peninsula National Park and will meet the April 1 deadline for the transfer of its conservation land.

This is the word from city council executive committee chairman Nomaindia Mfeketo, who dismissed fears that city officials were deliberately delaying the process.

More than R60-million in international funding for the park, much of which will be spent on creating several thousand jobs, is in a World Bank account but will not be released until the park is formally proclaimed.

Also, the local authorities involved, Cape Town, South Peninsula and the Cape Metropolitan Council, have a formal agreement to transfer their land by April 1.

If the process is not complete by then, they will have to renegotiate, sign a new agreement and advertise again for objections.

South Peninsula and the CMC have advertised for objections to the transfer of their land but Cape Town will place its advertisement only next week.

This means the last opportunity the Cape Town council will have to make a formal decision after considering objections will be at its meeting on March 31, literally the 11th hour.

National Party CMC councillor David Erleigh, who chaired the meetings of councillors from the three local authorities who hammered out the agreement over many months last year, told the Cape Argus he was deeply concerned at the tardiness of the African National Congress-controlled Cape Town municipality.

"We reached agreement at the end of last year after tremendous effort. Now they are beginning to prejudice the integrity of the project."

Asked to comment, Ms Mfeketo said the ANC had been committed to the new park from the outset.

"We are the ones who started this process, so why should we delay now? We definitely support it 100 percent."

Anglers call for 'beach hogs' ban

Sensitive coastline ecology at risk

(56) ARG 14/2/98

ADELE BALETA

A backlash has begun against anglers who churn up beaches by using off-road vehicles during fishing competitions.

Mossel Bay fishermen who go by foot to competitions are calling for an outright ban on 4x4s on South Cape beaches.

Rock and surf anglers who take part in fishing competitions near Mossel Bay have joined local residents who say they are fed up with beaches being defaced by vehicle tracks.

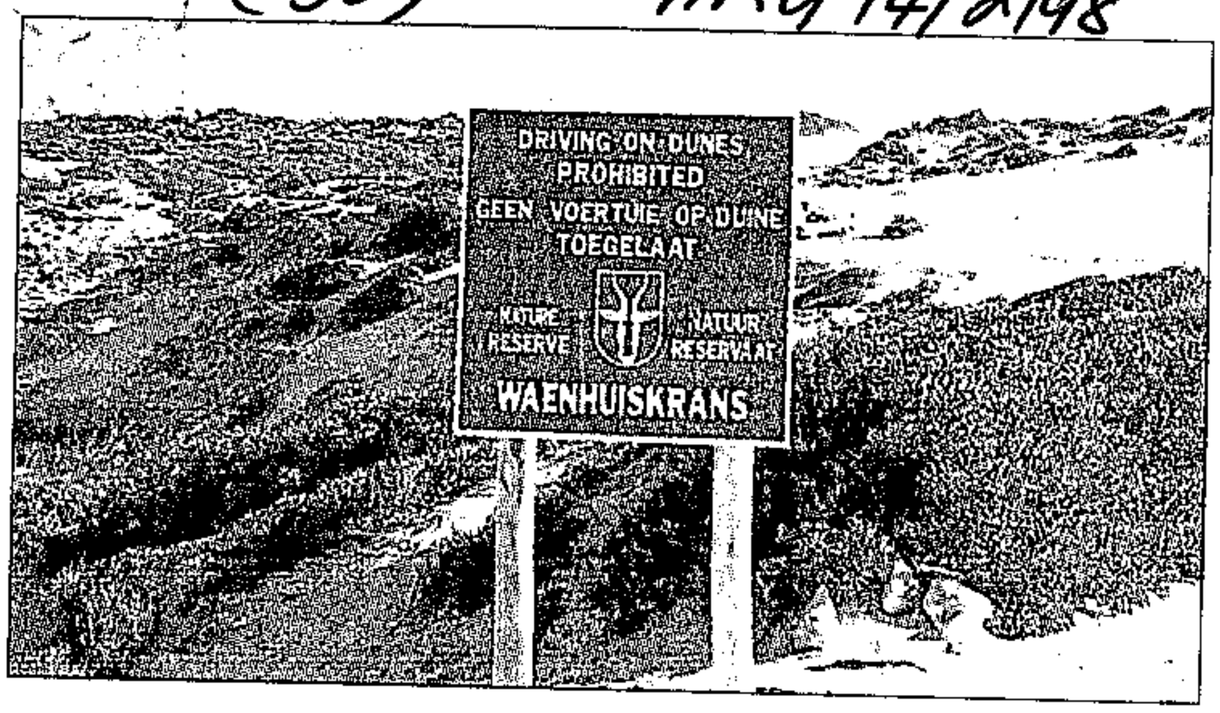
They are concerned that the drivers are disturbing vulnerable tracts of coastline which are breeding grounds for the rare African black oystercatcher.

Japhta Damons, a keen rock and surf angler said: "We can't see why these people have to go fishing with 4x4s. Why can't they walk like the rest of us?"

He rejected the argument that driving on the beach between the high-water and low-water mark made a minimal impact on the beaches.

"There are sand mussels and we have seen birds nesting in the inter-tidal zone," he said. An angling competition which included people from churches and schools would be held in March and the issue of vehicles on beaches would be discussed, he said.

"Most of us want these vehicle banned from the beaches," he added.



No entry: vehicles are prohibited from entering the reserve's dune areas

Last week, Saturday Argus reported that "beach hogs" were churning up a tract of sensitive beach between Dana Bay and Boggomsbaai.

Resident have accused the Southern Cape District Council of issuing permits to angling clubs without first consulting the community or informing Cape Nature Conservation.

The South Cape Coast Angling Union has strongly denied that members in any way abuse the environment.

In response to the Saturday Argus report, businessman Colin Bird has highlighted a similar problem at Waënhuiskrans nature reserve, south of Arniston.

He said the area had great historical significance being the site of ancient Khoi middens. It was also a recognised breeding ground of the African black oystercatcher and had fine coastal fynbos.

Off-road vehicles drove on dunes in spite of clear signs prohibiting this, he said.

Mr Bird added that although nature conservation staff were sympathetic to the concerns of the Waënhuiskrans community, they were hampered by financial constraints making it impossible for them to police the area effectively.

He said Cape Nature Conservation was also apparently concerned about the recreational needs of those who had easy access to the area.

Duncan Heard, acting director of Cape Nature Conservation said budget cuts meant there was not enough staff to manage the area and although personnel from De Hoop nature reserve helped, it was not enough.

The area was originally under the control of the Forestry Department which was concerned only with stabilising the sand dunes. "There was no need to control recreational activities in the area," said Mr Heard. Conservation inherited the area in 1987 and state land went up to the high-water mark. The area below this was not in the reserve. He said there was a proclaimed road to Struispunt where there was a beach which the Overberg District Council declared open to vehicles with a permit.

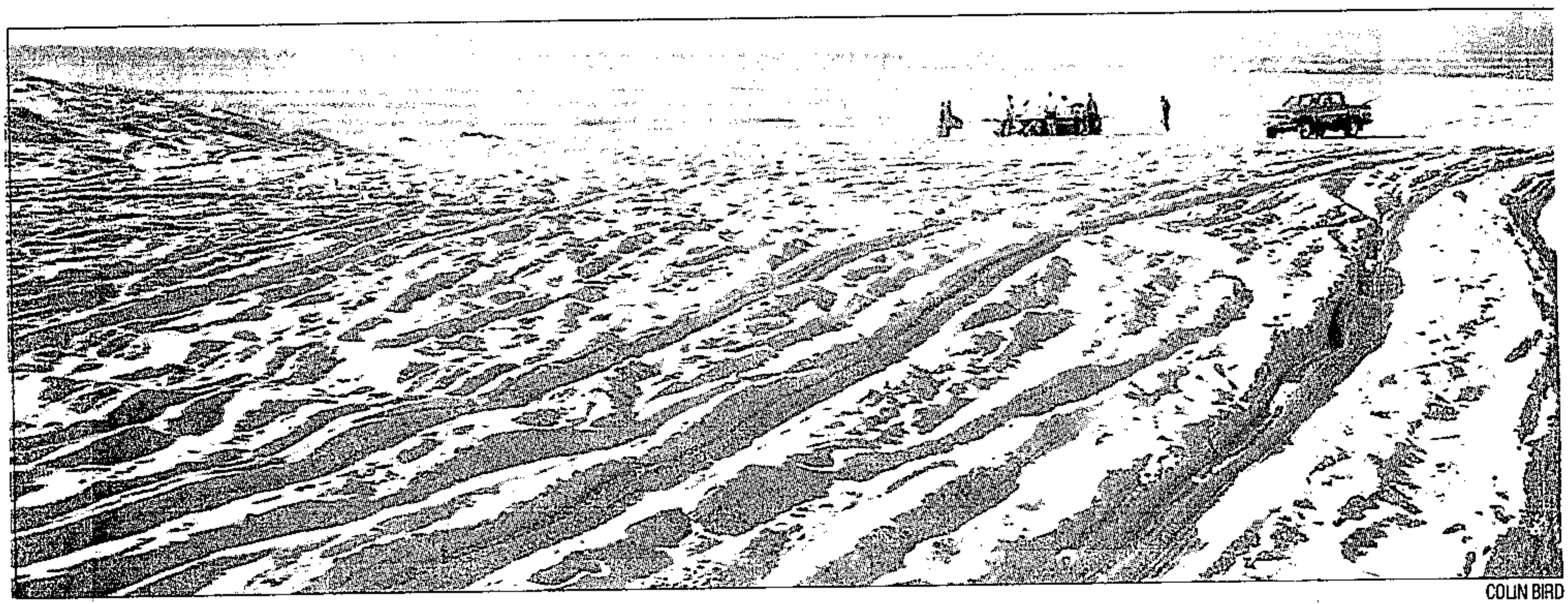
The council is facing a court case brought by the Western Cape environmental ministry for refusing to ban vehicles from the sensitive beach between Brandfontein and Suiderstrand, west of Cape Agulhas. The case is due to be heard later this year.

Commenting on Waënhuiskrans nature reserve, Mr Heard said: "It's impossible for us to keep control of all recreational activities in the area."

He said the Cape Nature Conservation Board Bill which would give his department more muscle, was with the environmental standing committee and would be tabled at the Western Cape provincial parliament next month.

When it was passed, Cape Nature Conservation would be allowed to enter into proposals with the private sector to generate money specifically for conservation issues.

See page 23



COLIN BIRD

Torn up: a view of the beach near the Waënhuiskrans nature reserve after 4x4 vehicles had torn up the sensitive sand dunes

Parks bill to profit from outcry

CHARL DE VILLIERS (56)

ST(CM) 15/2/98

THE Western Cape government has agreed to 11th-hour changes to a controversial draft law that would have empowered politicians to sell the region's fynbos treasury to private developers.

The Cape Nature Conservation Board Bill was sent back to the drawing board this week following an outcry from environmentalists.

Draft provisions would allow a proposed board to sell or lease land with the approval of the MECs for the environment and finance.

Critics are outraged and believe that politicians and semi-privatised boards should not be entrusted with major decisions, for which they need not be publicly accountable, about nature reserves and parks.

They fear this could lead to a fiasco like the leasing of Mpumulanga reserves to a Dubai group.

"There's no way that we want to see politicians leasing the De Hoop reserve to Malaysians for 20 years," Wildlife and Environment Society conservation ecologist Heather Shearer said this week.

Cape Nature Conservation spokesman Fanie Bekker said there was "no danger" of his department or its successor's wanting to alienate state conservation land. His department would not support activities that undermined conservation.

The chief administrator of Cape Nature Conservation, Kobus Bauermeister, confirmed that the controversial clauses would be redrafted.

Before her resignation, MEC for the Environment Martha Olckers said she would ensure the criticism was taken into account.

The proposed board is expected to take control of 12 580km² of reserves on April 1.

Conservationists support the move, but want cast-iron guarantees that the province's reserves will not be sold.

Environmental report on mine land 'needs revision'

(56) BD 16/2/98

Josey Ballenger

DURBAN Roodepoort Deep's draft environmental management programme report was likely to need heavy revision before it could pass muster with the minerals and energy department, an official said at the weekend.

The report concerns the mine's Rand Leases property, which has come under fire in recent months for dust blowing, water pollution and possible radiation from its slimes dam, particularly on the nearby Meadowlands community in Soweto.

Now the report, aiming at satisfying the Mineral Act's requirement that mining companies produce management programmes to mitigate environmental impact, has drawn sharp criticism for being "barely comprehensible". In addition, it lacks sufficient detail and is generally "superficial". The report was open to public comment until today.

"While the mine has recognised a number of environmental impacts to be significant, requiring mitigation, no specific mitigation measures are proposed for some of these impacts," the environmental risk services division of independent consultancy CRM International Group said.

Furthermore, statements indicating that no, very little or negligible impact resulting from mining activities were "neither quantified nor qualified", CRM said. "The (report) generally lacks sufficient details for an interested and affected party to comprehend or assess the impacts recognised." This was partly due to the "poor" general surface plan map and partly to the "superficial style of the document". There was also "no commitment to", or details of, a dust monitoring programme, CRM said.

Durban Deep embarked late last year on a R115 000 "grassing", or vegetation, programme to cut dust levels by 80%.

Legal Resources Centre attorney Ellen Nicol said the centre would submit that the minerals and energy department reject the report "on the basis that it did not follow reasonable administrative procedure" outlined in SA's constitution.

Specifically, the report could be challenged in the high court for not recognising the Meadowlands community as an interested and affected party, she said.

In addition, the authorities had not distributed the report to the community for comment.

"We all know that there are numerous structures within a community that need to be approached. Municipal government is not everything," Nicol said.

"It is a slap in the face to the community because they are not even listed (as an interested and affected party) in the report."

Gauteng minerals development director Neels Hoek said he was under the impression that the minerals and energy department had distributed the report to the community, and that it would "be consulted".

However, Hoek said that the report was "far from being approved. I can tell you (it) will be revised again".

He said many problems were still unresolved, including lack of control over polluted water seeping from the slimes dam into Klip River tributaries.

Johannesburg's Group for Environmental Monitoring said at the weekend that it was also finalising a submission.

Protest over toxic dump gathers momentum

Star 19/2/98 (56)

Nelspruit – Mpumalanga's health department yesterday added its voice to the growing protest against a proposed R55-million toxic waste dump near Nelspruit by warning developers that the dump would harm rural communities.

The proposed metallurgical residue dump site at Cairn would comprise a R35-million chemical processing plant as well as the dump. It is being developed by the Manganese Metal Company and is intended to replace an older, smaller dump at Pappas Quarry.

The company has already been targeted by protesters. It has also received 50 written objections. Mpumalanga environmental health officer Stanley Mkhabela said in a report to the national Department of Land Affairs yesterday the proposed toxic dump would "undeniably" impact negatively on the health of a community about to be settled in the area.

His report contradicted an earlier environmental impact study supporting a toxic dump at Cairn or at Kingston Vale.

He said the department had changed its verdict because it was told at the time the community would be evicted to make way for the toxic dump.

Manganese Metal Company technical manager Jan Eigenhuis rejected the objections of the health department and residents, and said the Department of Water Affairs had pronounced the company's waste products to be chemically stable and non-hazardous.

He said the company had scheduled a development tribunal hearing in Nelspruit from February 25 to 27. – Sapa

Animal fund donates R2m to Addo

BD 20/2/98

THE International Fund for Animal Welfare will donate nearly R2m to the Addo Elephant Park today to buy land to increase the elephant population.

The fund has invited film star Mia Farrow to present a cheque on behalf of the fund to National Parks Board chairman Anthony Hall-Martin.

The 12 000ha Addo Elephant Park is home to 265 pachyderms — making it the largest single collection of African elephants

A spokesman for the fund, Delwin Kriel, said yesterday that the fund had continuously donated funds for the relocation of elephants from all over the country to Addo.

"The aim is to purchase farming land next to the park to allow the elephant reserve to expand and increase the population," Kriel said. (56)

REPORTS: Sapa, ECN.

Move to save endangered reptile species

(56)

Josey Ballenger

BD 20/2/98

LIZARDS, snakes, tortoises and other popular reptilian pets are increasingly threatened as a species — a trend the SA environmental affairs department wants to put a damper on.

The department said this week the growing use of reptiles and amphibians as domestic pets and traditional medicine ingredients in SA and abroad endangered their survival.

"The international pet market is booming and SA reptiles are considered special. Certain types are not found anywhere else in world," said assistant environmental officer Christelle du Preez, who cited the sungazer lizard as one such creature. "We need to determine how endangered some species are and revise their status."

Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan's office said the department would team up with provincial nature conservation institutions to develop a national strategy on the "conservation and sustainable use" of SA reptiles and amphibians.

The strategy would ensure "a uniform and co-ordinated approach" and would be based on principles contained in last year's white papers on environmental management policy as well as the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

Du Preez said the department did not want to outlaw all utilisation. She said it would consider issuing permits for export, import and transport and would target traditional healers, research institutions and zoologists.

A discussion document available from the department and open to public comment will be "refined" into an "action-orientated strategy document" at an April 21-22 workshop in Pretoria for government and non-governmental organisation officials.

NE

TOURISM *Dubai-based group to start three lead projects in Mpumalanga development*

Dolphin deal back on track

(56) CT (BR) 20/2/98

JUSTIN ARENSTEIN

Loskop Dam — Mpumalanga's much-maligned R20 billion Dolphin deal is finally back on track with plans for construction to begin on at least three lead projects by mid-year, Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) spokesman Gary Sutter said yesterday.

But the three developments, estimated to be worth R100 million, are not in any of the original deal's core development areas. Dolphin may have to tender for at least one of the proposed developments in KwaNdebele.

The Dubai-based Dolphin Group secured a controversial 25-year contract with MPB in 1996 for the exclusive commercial development of a series of prime tourist attractions, including the MPB's flagship game reserve at Songimvelo and the world-renowned Blyde River Canyon reserve.

Although the largely secret deal was struck almost 18 months ago, it was nearly derailed by public outrage at the perceived exclusion of local investors, the lack of consultation, secrecy and disregard for land claims on some of the development sites.

Sutter said yesterday that the lead projects included a lodge at the Loskop Dam reserve, a day-visitor centre at God's Window near Blyde and a resort facility in the former KwaNdebele.

"While Loskop and God's Window were part of the initial Dolphin deal, KwaNdebele was not. It will have to go out to open tender before getting board approval," said Sutter.

Stressing that plans were still in a preliminary phase, he added that the MPB was becoming increasingly concerned with delays caused by land claims on the "really prime" development sites at Blyde River and Songimvelo.

"We're committed to respecting the land restitution process but are very concerned about the serious delays hampering the process which significantly slow down our task of commercialising provincially owned reserves," he said.

Sutter added that MPB was monitoring with great interest Aventura's current privatisation process and the court interdict by Pretoria-based Legal Resource Centre against Aventura's inclusion of its Blyde River resort.

"Although our own processes are in no way related to the Aventura scenario, it will nevertheless be interesting to see whether precedents are set which bear on our development ideas," he said.

— African Eye News Service

Chameleons mulched into wine

M+G 20-26/2/98 (56)

Fiona Macleod

The next time you raise your glass to Bacchus, ponder this: you may be poisoning yourself with the remains of chameleons which get mulched in the wine-making process.

The organisers of a campaign to save chameleons in the Western Cape say they are being decimated by mechanical harvesters which have been imported from France and Italy.

"The harvesters use vibration to shake the grapes from their stalks," says campaign leader Matt Louwrens. "Chameleons which are present in many vineyards cannot cling to the vines and are harvested along with the grapes."

Phillip Kubukeli, president of the Western Cape Traditional Doctors, Herbalists and Spiritual Healers' Association, says wine contaminated by chameleons is poisonous to humans.

Khayelitsha residents, who are taking his warning seriously, were planning to protest outside Stellenbosch Farmers Winery this week. Students from the University of Stellenbosch and members of the Food and Allied Workers' Union planned to join the picket.

The union supports the campaign as the imported mechanical harvesters have deprived some members of their livelihood. "Hand-picking grapes is not only more environmentally friendly but creates more work," says Louwrens.

He is calling for the arrest and prosecution of manufacturers who are using mechanical harvesters. He points out that, according to Cape provincial regulations, it is illegal to "sell anything manufactured from the carcass of any endangered wild animal" without a permit.

"Cape dwarf chameleons are among the species being decimated by the harvesters. They are listed on Appendix II by Cites [the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species], which means they are endangered and threatened with extinction unless subject to strict regulation."

Louwrens has collected hundreds of signatures for a petition against mechanical harvesting. "Quite apart from anything else," he says, "chameleons are of benefit to the vineyards in terms of insect control, so they should be nurtured rather than wiped out."

Stellenbosch Farmers Winery's André Steyn says his organisation does not use mechanical harvesters, though it may have to do so in the future. "There's no evidence I can find of any chameleons being found in harvesters," he says, "but if it is so, we would be alarmed because we wouldn't want them in our wine crushers.

"The industry is moving on to more natural viticultural practices. If the evidence shows that chameleons are a problem, we would have to take notice of it."

Harvested: These chameleons were collected this week by a labourer working at a Stellenbosch wine estate. PHOTOGRAPH: MAX BASTARD

Plans to can 'canned' lion hunts

M+G 20-26/2/98 (56)

Fiona Macleod

Setting up a big cat commission would help put an end to "canned" lion hunting, says a report that will be submitted to Parliament in the next few weeks.

The commission would ban the hunting of big cats in small enclosures, from vehicles or hides, by drugging or baiting them, and while they are pregnant or feeding their young. Video footage of hunts in South Africa in all these situations shocked the world when it was flighted in the British documentary *The Cook Report* last May.

Eight months later, the "canned" lion-hunting industry is still thriving. Conservation authorities have done little more than promise to investigate the situation. Their attitude appears to be that it is private individuals who are creating the problem — and it will take private initiative to sort it out.

Soon after the release of *The Cook Report*, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Pallo Jordan met the nine environmental MECs and promised stricter hunting regulations in provinces where illegal hunting is taking place. Towards the end of last year, the minister also recommended that all the MECs impose a voluntary moratorium on granting licences for new lion-breeding facilities.

'... permits are being issued on an ad hoc basis, and it's virtually impossible for anyone to find out what the criteria are'

But it is this balkanisation of responsibility to the provinces that enables the "canned" lion-hunting industry to thrive, argues Dillon Hale, the researcher who compiled the parliamentary report. He is calling for a national policy, which will be implemented by the big cat commission.

Hale points out that the regulations being applied by the nine provinces are still those used by the old Transvaal, Natal, Orange Free State and Cape, some of them dating back to 1969. They are not only outdated, he says, but impossible to administer.

"The result is that permits are being issued on an ad hoc basis, and it's virtually impossible for anyone to find out what the criteria are. It's anything but an open, transparent decision-making process."

Hale's 150-page report, commissioned by the International Fund for Animal Welfare and partly researched in the United States, makes wide-ranging recommendations on the hunting, trade, transportation and captivity of big cats. It calls for the special protection of lions, leopards and cheetahs, not only because they are "rare and endangered", but because of their "traditional African historical, religious and social importance".

Cheetah, it argues, should never be hunted, poisoned, snared or killed under any circumstances. "To all intents and purposes, cheetahs are extinct in Southern Africa," says Hale. "Their reproductive success is very low, particularly in the wild."

There is disagreement about how many leopards are left in Southern Africa. Two experts appointed by the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species came up with the figure of 9 000 in 1992, but local scientists say this is way too high — they argue it's more like 2 000 to 3 000.

Among the more controversial of Hale's recommendations about hunting leopards are that they should not be "ambushed" near their lairs, and they should not be lured on to a bait. "One of the fallacies about leopards is that you can't use the walk-and-track method to find them," he says.

If Hale's proposals are accepted, hunting of all captive-bred cats would be banned. Wild leopards could be hunted in areas ranging from 3 500ha to 17 000ha, depending on the terrain. Similarly, wild lions could be hunted in areas between 5 000ha and 20 000ha.

"The objective is to ensure these animals are hunted under fair, ethical conditions. Although range is to a large degree dependent on prey density, setting minimum-size hunting areas is the safest way to ensure that a non-artificial hunt takes place."

He recommends the big cat commission should comprise 12 members from a broad range of organisations. It should be funded by money raised from the permits it grants, "in order to avoid criticisms, particularly in the run-up to the next election, that it will be expensive and the money would be better spent on people".

Govt 'positive' about mine water purification plan

David McKay

BD 20/2/98

THE minerals and energy department will give cautious but positive feedback to proposals by gold mines for the creation of an independent water purification company.

This was after a number of gold mining companies, led by Durban Roodepoort Deep (Durban Deep), presented plans to the department to manage the pumping and purification of contaminated water from underground gold mines.

Andre Cronje, of the minerals and energy department, said yesterday he could not discuss details of the department's reply ahead of an internal memo due to be circulated this week. However, he said the department would tell Durban Roodepoort Deep next week that setting up a privately run water purification industry was "a good idea", although several technical questions needed to be examined.

Funding for up to three purification plants, each estimated to cost between R200m and R250m, is to be raised by the mines.

Durban Deep MD Mike Prinsloo said funding would be discussed at a workshop on March 4 to which all interested parties would be invited.

The mines would raise the finance provided government backed the plan and became a stakeholder in the water company, he said. The mines include Western Areas, Harmony Group's Grootvlei and Consolidated Modderfontein and Durban Deep.

Other issues to be discussed at the workshop include the water treatment options open to the stakeholders.

The plan is to purify water for human and industrial use which could be used to bolster supplies from the Vaal Dam and the Lesotho Highlands water project.

The independent company will purify pumped underground water, which in the case of Durban Deep is about 240Ml a day.

Thor sued again – denies new work on mercury

(56)

OWN CORRESPONDENT

ARG 21/2/98

Durban – A second group of Thor Chemicals employees from the Cato Ridge-based plant is suing the company in the British High Court for damages allegedly because of mercury poisoning.

This comes amid evidence that the Cato Ridge plant had resumed production of mercury catalyst for a US chemicals and plastics company, with the full knowledge of the Department of Water Affairs.

Mercury catalyst is used to activate chemicals in the PVC production process.

On Thursday attorney Richard Meeran, acting for 21 employees, 16 of whom are currently employed, confirmed that papers had been served on the Thor Chemicals holding company in the United Kingdom.

The company's Cato Ridge plant undertook to stop all production of mercury-containing products after two workers died of mercury poisoning and 30 were injured a few years ago.

A Thor Chemicals spokesman flatly denied that the company was involved in the production of mercury-related products.

However, she said that up to January the company was still phasing out such production.

Cape drinking water is of 'shocking' quality

(56) ST (CT) 22/2/98

CHARL DE VILLIERS

THOUSANDS of people in the Western Cape are drinking below-par water which, in some cases, is of "shocking" quality, according to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

The CSIR's findings are based on the sampling of 12 rural communities — which, except for Stellenbosch, Zuurbraak and Middleton near Caledon, the CSIR refused to identify.

CSIR spokesman Dr Johan de Beer said the information was confidential and could only be released by local authorities which took part in the study.

But according to the January edition of Technobrief, a CSIR publication sent to the Cape Metro, the issue of unsafe water was not limited to the 12 test communities.

It said the CSIR's Cape water programme had "clearly demonstrated that the problem of poor drinking water quality exists on a large scale" in the rural parts of the Western Cape.

The CSIR has warned that about 20 percent of deaths in the one-to-five-year age group are attributed to diarrhoea — and, internationally, up to 50 000 people die daily from water-related diseases.

The CSIR's Western Cape survey found that a third of the tested communities did not disinfect their drinking water, and in most cases chlorination was not done effectively.

"The microbiological sampling results were even more shocking," said the CSIR.

"At the time of sampling it was found that in 10 of the 12 communities, more than two-thirds of the samples collected failed the South African Bureau of Standards' drinking-water maximum allowable limit.

"In 58 percent of all communities, all samples collected failed the SABS recommended limits, while in 42 percent of them, all samples collected failed the SABS maximum allowable limits."

Stellenbosch assistant town engineer Dirk Hattingh confirmed that even one of the Western Cape's wealthiest rural towns had failed water quality testing by the CSIR's Division for Water, Environment and Forestry Technology.

"Sampling found that the bacteriological quality of Stellenbosch's drinking water was not up to standard. The natural chemical composition of the town's water had also caused cement to leach out of water pipes," Hattingh said.

Additional chlorination stations and limestone treatment had resolved both problems, but kilometres of piping had to be replaced at huge cost.

The CSIR said in only one community did all samples satisfy the SABS recommended and maximum allowable limits. Only two communities passed the quality guidelines laid down by the SABS maximum allowable limits.

Department of Water Affairs water quality chief Sakkie van der Westhuizen said South Africa did not have legally enforceable water quality regulations.

"There are only guidelines, and the quality of drinking water is the responsibility of the Department of Health.

"Bulk water supplies are usually OK, especially with regard to bacteriological quality, but problems are far more widespread in isolated rural areas where local authorities do not always function effectively."

The new Water Services Act expected local authorities to be responsible for both the supply and quality of water, Van der Westhuizen added.

Water firm takes steps to avoid sewage overflows into Klip River

(56) DD 23/2/98

Josey Ballenger

THE East Rand Water Care Company (Erwat) has taken steps to avoid sewage-related overflows following pollution of the Klip River late last year, the company said last week.

Erwat planned to spend between R50m and R100m next year to expand the Waterval plant where the Klip problems emerged but in the meantime spent R2,3m on upgrading its Dekema and Rondelbult plants, operations executive manager Jurie Terreblanche said.

In addition, the Germiston city council was installing water metres to identify areas adversely affected by rainwater infiltration.

Terreblanche said that while management was not sure the company was a culprit of past Klip pollution even after investigations at its plant, the moves were intended to eliminate overflows.

He said the plant was designed to handle 105Ml a day in dry weather or 260Ml in rain and that the average flow was 87Ml to 90Ml. He said there could have been times when the inflow was higher, "off the charts" of monitoring instruments.

Environmentalists and residents accused the plant last year of letting bacterial "biomass" solids creep into the river because of its overflow. A nearby Everite Building Products factory was also blamed for spilling hundreds of litres of an oily substance into the river. Hundreds of fish and two ibis died.

Erwat's then-district manager acknowledged at the time that biomass could have increased the quantity of diarrhoea-causing E coli in the water, while Everite denied any spills into the river.

Since then, a Klip River Forum has been established, attended by residents, environmental groups, Erwat, Everite, maize mill African Products, the water affairs department and supplier Rand Water.

Henley Environmental Group spokesman Owen Thomas said the group found the river to be "consistently clean" in its twice-daily checks. In addition, it did regular aerial inspections of Everite and had not observed any indiscretions.

However, David Honer, the chairman of the Green Valley residents association, said a trench Erwat had dug which eventually leads to the river had become full of sludge from the company's dumping grounds two weeks ago. Erwat management countered that the trench was a stormwater canal and in a different area to its dumping grounds.

The Klip is a Vaal River tributary and a source of drinking water in Gauteng. It is also used for agricultural and recreational purposes.

Mine told to study people's dust problems

Josey Ballenger

BD 23/2/98 (56)

COUNCILLORS and community members called on the Durban Roodepoort Deep mining company last week to assess the health problems created by mine dump dust in areas around Soweto.

Councillor Norman Barlow of the Greater Johannesburg western substructure, which covers large parts of Soweto and the coloured township Fleurhof, said the company should at least pay for a health study of children attending nearby schools.

School principals in the area said children suffered from chest and eye problems, asthma, itchy skin and other ailments which made "work difficult for adults and created a concentration problem for kids".

However, Moroeroe Primary School principal Dikeledi Mahlo, situated on the Meadowlands dump's edge, said the dust problem had improved since the company entered into a two-year R114 000 contract with EnviroGreen late last year to "grass" the top surface of the dump to reduce dust levels by at least 80%.

The comments were made at a meeting on Thursday intended to brief members of the parliamentary minerals and energy portfolio committee. The committee was on a "fact-finding mission" in Gauteng and the Northern Province.

The failure of Durban Roodepoort Deep to send officials to the mission drew criticism from the councillors, community and environmental representatives present, but the company's management and the Gauteng environmental affairs department said the company had been formally invited at "short notice" the previous day.

The community also called for the dump's slopes to be grassed, which company MD Mike Prinsloo said would be considered at a later date. "We will do what we can do in a reasonable timeframe," Prinsloo said yesterday.

"We would need to (chemically) treat the slopes first, and there is a huge cost involved. The problem lies on the top surface; little dust comes off the slopes. So we are treating that first, and then we will evaluate" the programme.

Prinsloo said the company had allocated R385 000 to the Meadowlands environmental programme.

Several community members complained at the meeting that they had not seen the company's draft environmental management programme report. The report was distributed to interested and affected parties by the minerals and energy affairs department.

The report was open to public comment until last Monday, but the meeting was told the department might grant an extension.

Prinsloo said all comments would be carefully considered. Some critical comments reported last week expressed concerns already being addressed by mine management. He encouraged the councillors and community members to submit their suggestions regarding the health survey to the department.

Duma Nkosi, chairman of the parliamentary committee, said the committee had an "open, flexible mind", but that mines in general were "not involved enough in dealing with environmental problems". The committee did not meet company management.

Following its visits to Durban Roodepoort Deep and Grootvlei, the committee would visit gold mines in the Western Cape. It expected to report its findings from the visits this week.

CCA in R183-m capital injection

(56) (~~256~~) Sowetan 24/2/98

CONSERVATION Corporation Africa (CCA) announced a capital injection of R183 million yesterday from its existing shareholders to consolidate the group's portfolio of 20 lodges across Africa.

The amount will be raised through a share placing, a rights issue and the conversion of redeemable preference shares and debentures into equity.

CCA's major shareholders, Getty Family Interests, Southern Sun, the AECI pension fund, Hambros plc and Wellcome Trust will take up a R74,33 million placing and have underwritten R69,37 million of the R79,28 million rights issue as part of the deal.

Group chief executive Dave Varty says shareholders are expected to convert between R39,64 million and R54,51 million worth of converted redeemable shares and debentures into equity.

He says a major expansion programme, which has seen the group increase its lodge capacity more than twofold, has drained its financial resources prompting the need for a capital injection.

The group spent R110 million on capital expansion up to June 1997.

Varty said the group's financial position was worsened by borrowings in the June 1997 financial year to finance acquisitions and to establish marketing and sales offices in London, Dublin and Miami.

Part of the capital raised will be used to retire the debts accrued during the acquisitions, expansions and refurbishment. He says a decision has been taken by the group's board to stop further expansion and concentrate on the consolidation of existing portfolios.

Clean-up averts city oil disaster

Two rivers saved

SHARKEY ISAACS
STAFF REPORTER

ARG 25/2/98
(56)

Anti-pollution teams have done a major clean-up after 10 000 litres of heavy furnace oil gushed from a ruptured boiler tank in Epping Industria, into a car park and into stormwater drains.

The spill happened when workers inadvertently ruptured a valve while disconnecting the tank at a construction site.

The oil flowed into drains leading to a major underground stormwater network linked to the Jakkalsvlei canal running to the Vygieskraal and Black rivers. City water pollution control inspectors say they learnt of the accident about 5pm on February 13, 24 hours after the spill happened, when stormwater pollution monitors detected oil in the system.

They traced the source from emergency service reports – the contractor had notified the fire brigade and his staff had dumped sand in the parking area.

Clean-up staff have been working round-the-clock since then, says hazardous material expert Dave Marock, managing-director of Design Cleaning System.

"Personnel worked in difficult conditions in the huge underground stormwater network. They had to use auxiliary breathing equipment after 600 metres, and air-powered pneumatic drills because any spark from electricity-powered tools could have ignited the oil," said Mr Marock.

"Booms were put up all along the route to filter off the oil – with imported cultivated organic sphagnum moss to absorb it. Booms were spaced and 12 were placed upfront and another four further on. The moss, imported from Canada, had to be suspended from specially-constructed booms to skim off the oil."

The cost of the clean-up has not been finalised but it is understood the building contractor will be held responsible.

Conservation board appointed

Josey Ballenger

BD 25/2/98

NATURE conservation management could be restructured following the findings of an inquiry commissioned by Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan.

One of the items on the agenda was allowing communities near national parks and protected areas to have input in their management.

Appeal Court Judge Mark Kumleben will chair the inquiry board. The department has requested that interested parties submit written memoranda to the board by April 20, at which time it would decide whether to conduct interviews or public hearings on the matter.

CAPE TIMES
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1998

HOOKS TAKE HEAVY SEABIRD TOLL

CT 25/2/98

New fishing method will save birds' lives

ABOUT 10% of all wandering albatrosses, the largest of all flying birds, are killed on longline hooks annually. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

MAJOR South African fishing companies have got together with a Norwegian company to use an innovative longline fishing method to try to save seabirds — thousands die on the lethal fish hooks every year, including the king of seabirds, the albatross.

An estimated 40 000 albatrosses die on longline tuna fishing hooks in the southern ocean every year, and about 10% of the world population of wandering albatross, the largest of all flying birds, are killed on longline hooks annually.

Millions of hooks are set in the southern ocean every year, where they are "shot" through the air from the stern of a vessel, land on the sea surface and slowly sink.

Seabirds, which naturally scavenge, see the bait as a tasty morsel. They are unable to tell there is a lethal hook under the bait, and once they're caught, they are dragged underwater with the weighted lines, and drown.

Up to 145 000 seabirds drown on these hooks every year. A fishing vessel shoots up to 30 000 baited hooks into the sea a day.

The new method, called the Mustad Autoline system, developed by a Norwegian company, shoots the longlines with their thousands of hooks from an underwater pipe, so the hooks are set about two metres underwater. In this way the bait is not visible to the seabirds.

This week representatives of the the South African fishing companies I&J and Bartostar Fishing, sailed offshore in the Norwegian vessel Elfisk to test the system.

The South Africa companies plan to buy the vessel, which will be reflagged and will become the first South African vessel to use this bird-friendly fishing method.

Below decks, the 40 000 hooks and lines lie in rows, hooked over metal rods. When the machinery is started, up to 5 000 of these hooks start moving, are baited automatically with mackerel, and enter the sea through the underwater pipe.

When the Elfisk set the underwater lines about 19 miles off Cape Town this week, no seabirds appeared for some time. All that was visible was an oily wake on the surface of the sea from the oily bait.

This is a far-cry from the hundreds of birds that usually swirl and dive behind fishing vessels that set their longlines on the sea surface.

As the lines were being drawn back onto the vessel, some birds appeared, including sabine gulls, white-chinnes petrels, gannets and sooty petrels. Most of them seemed to be picking up fragments of bait, but no birds were hooked.

I&J's marine research manager, Mr Barrie Rose, said I&J held a permit to fish for Patagonian toothfish off South Africa's Marion and Prince Edward islands. A condition of the permit was that they fish at night only, when many of the seabirds don't feed. The aim was to reduce bird deaths.

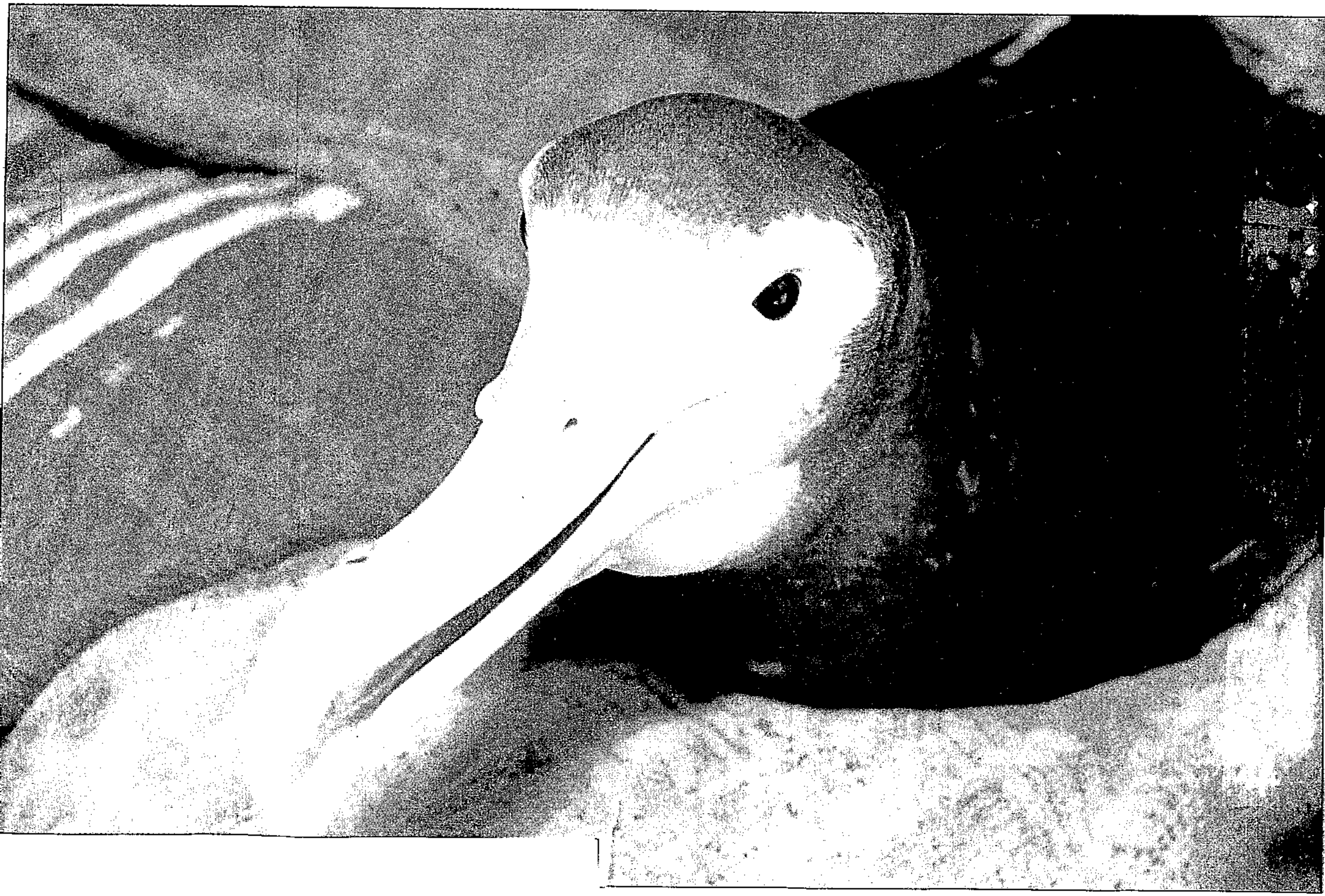
"We will use this underwater line-setting system on the Elfisk when she goes down to the islands again, and if it works well, it means we will be able to fish 24 hours, instead of nights only," Rose said.

The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources said the rate at which seabirds were being killed on fish hooks was causing a noticeable decline in some species worldwide.

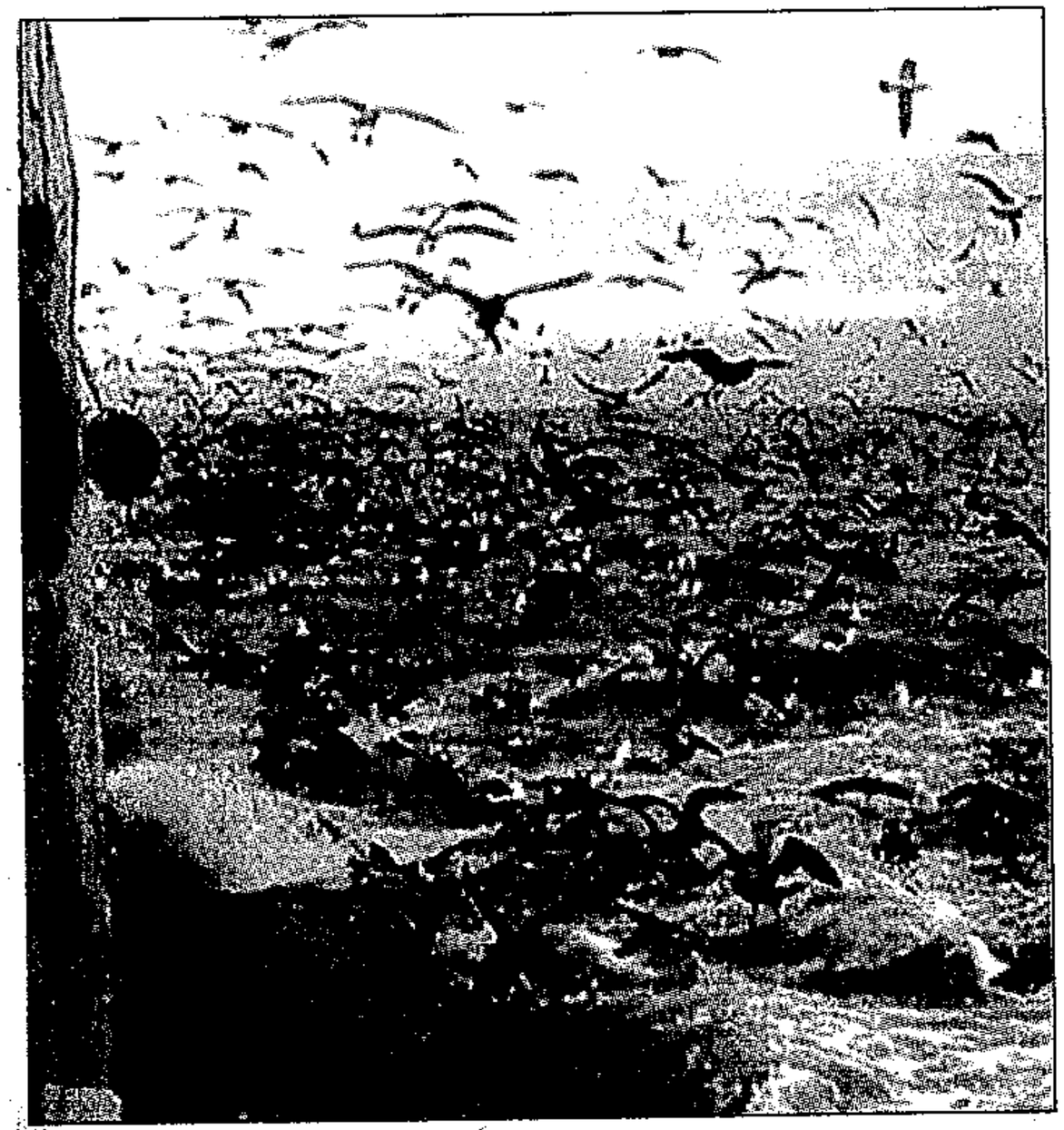
"Unless fishing practices are changed in a way that will prevent large numbers of seabirds being caught, the survival of some populations is doubtful," the commission said in a booklet aimed at getting fishing companies to become more bird-friendly.

UCT ornithologist Dr John Cooper, who was also on board the Elfisk this week, has been given funding from Bird Life International to do a global review on the effect of long-lining on seabirds.

"I'll be gathering information and coming up with recommendations on how to make the longline fishing industry more bird-friendly. This underwater setting system is one of the suggestions," he said.



GROUNDED: This young wandering albatross, which has an injured leg, is being treated at Sanccob. Of the 14 albatross species, 10 are confined to the southern ocean. Wandering albatross can sustain speeds of 80km/h and cross entire oceans in days. ***PICTURE: THEMBINKOSI DWAYISAK***



SCAVENGERS: Seabirds swirl behind a longine fishing vessel, attracted by the bait on the hooks. ***PICTURES: COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ANTARCTIC MARINE LIVING RESOURCES***

Soft spot for hurt albatross

A YOUNG wandering albatross, which as an adult will have a wingspan of up to 3,5metres, was found injured at Plettenberg Bay.

A family brought the bird in their air-conditioned caravan to Sanccob, Cape Town, where it is being treated for two cuts on its leg.

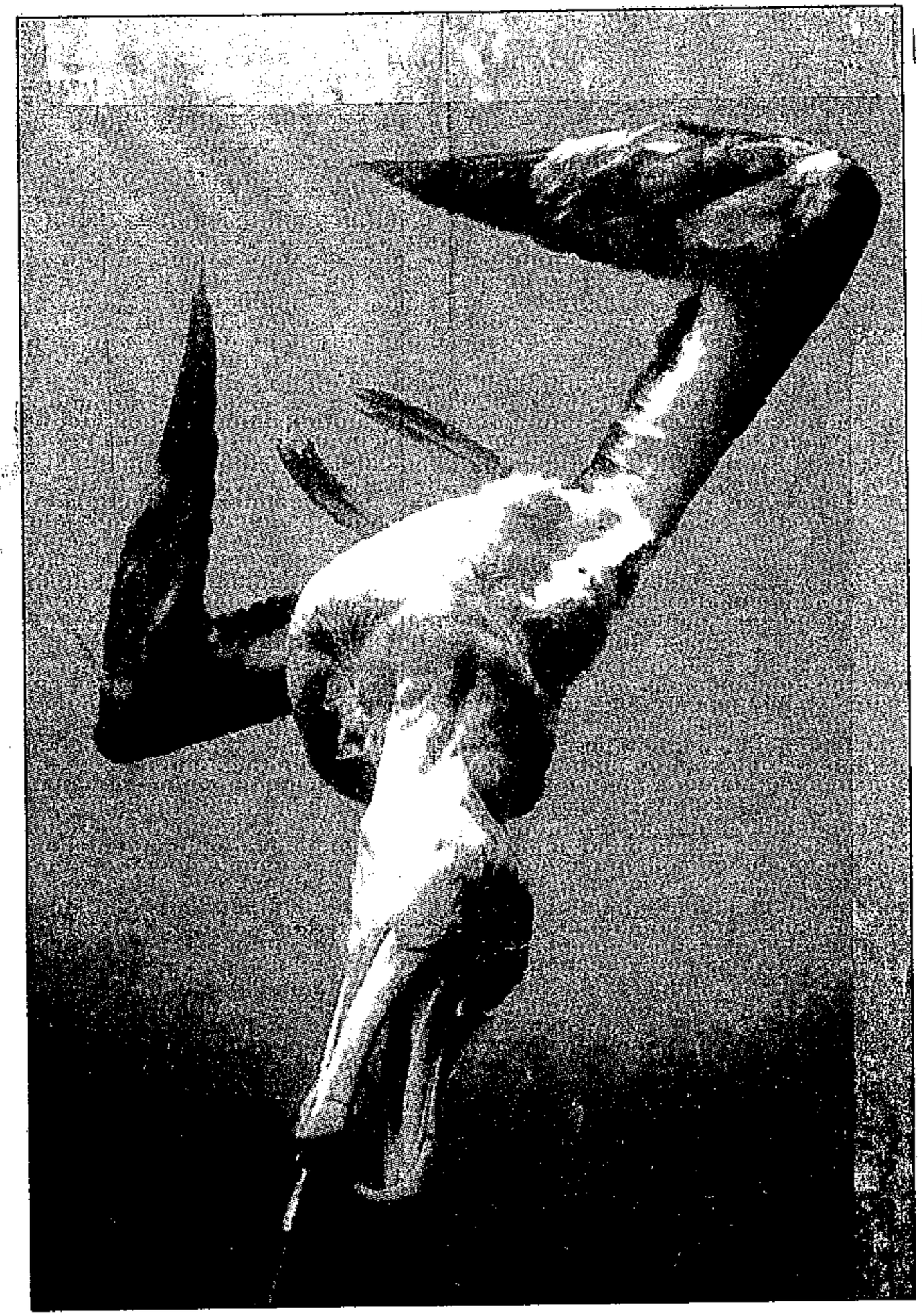
Sanccob vet Mr François Lampen said he was unable to tell what had caused the injury.

"But it is clearly painful and the bird is not using that leg. It was found on the beach at Plett."

Albatross spent most of their lives in the air and if they lay on the hard ground for too long, it injured their breastbones, he said.

"To avoid this, we have made a sort of airbed for it, with black rubbish bags stuffed with crumpled newspaper. Over this we put towels, so that when it sits, it is soft," Lampen said.

Sanccob is also treating a giant petrel which has a broken wing.



DEATH HOOKS: This albatross was hooked on a longline fish hook. Around 40 000 albatrosses die in this way every year. Most birds are caught when they go for the bait before the weighted line sinks.

Court pulls plug on Oudekraal hotel scheme

ED WEST
DEPUTY FINANCE EDITOR

ARG 26/2/98

The final liquidation of the beleaguered De Oudekraal hotel development was granted in the High Court today.

The developer of the project, Hottentots Huisie Investments, owned by Steve Jones, had hoped to receive money from French hotel group Accor to stave off the final liquidation order, but the funds were not forthcoming by the time the case was heard in court.

Accor had signed a management contract with Mr Jones and had reportedly pledged R8-million.

Peter Whelan, the attorney representing Standard Corporate and Merchant Bank (SCMB), the institution which had applied for the liquidation of the development, told the court any hope of saving the development was a "pipedream", as R17-million was required to complete the hotel.

Mr Whelan told the Cape Argus after the court proceedings that the hotel development was now irrevocably in the hands of the liquidators, and the liquidators would have to "look to the creditors to see how the hotel development should be further administered". SCMB was the largest creditor, with R35-million owed to it.

He would not say what SCMB's plans were for the development. "We will be meeting with the liquidators in five minutes to discuss this very issue," he said.

Toxic oil spill bungle in city

CT 26/2/98

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

(56)

THIRTY hours after a massive oil spill in Epping Industria had entered the stormwater system, the Department of Water Affairs discovered the pollution through an anonymous tip-off.

About 18 000 litres of heavy furnace oil, a toxic substance which may cause cancer and which is lethal to aquatic life, spilled out of a storage tank at a factory in Epping around noon on February 12 after building contractors had been removing piping on the tank during renovations.

The contractors say they were told the tank was empty.

The oil had spread about 2km from the source before it was contained 30 hours later.

It appears there was an attempt to cover up the spill, as none of the local authorities or Water Affairs were told about it.

Had it not been for the tip-off, the oil, which had already entered the Jakkalsvlei River, would have flowed into the Black River and eventually into Table Bay.

The vapour from the fuel was concentrated in the Jakkalsvlei box canal, and if it had accidentally been ignited, could have caused a "flashback" — set the oil alight along the length of the river.

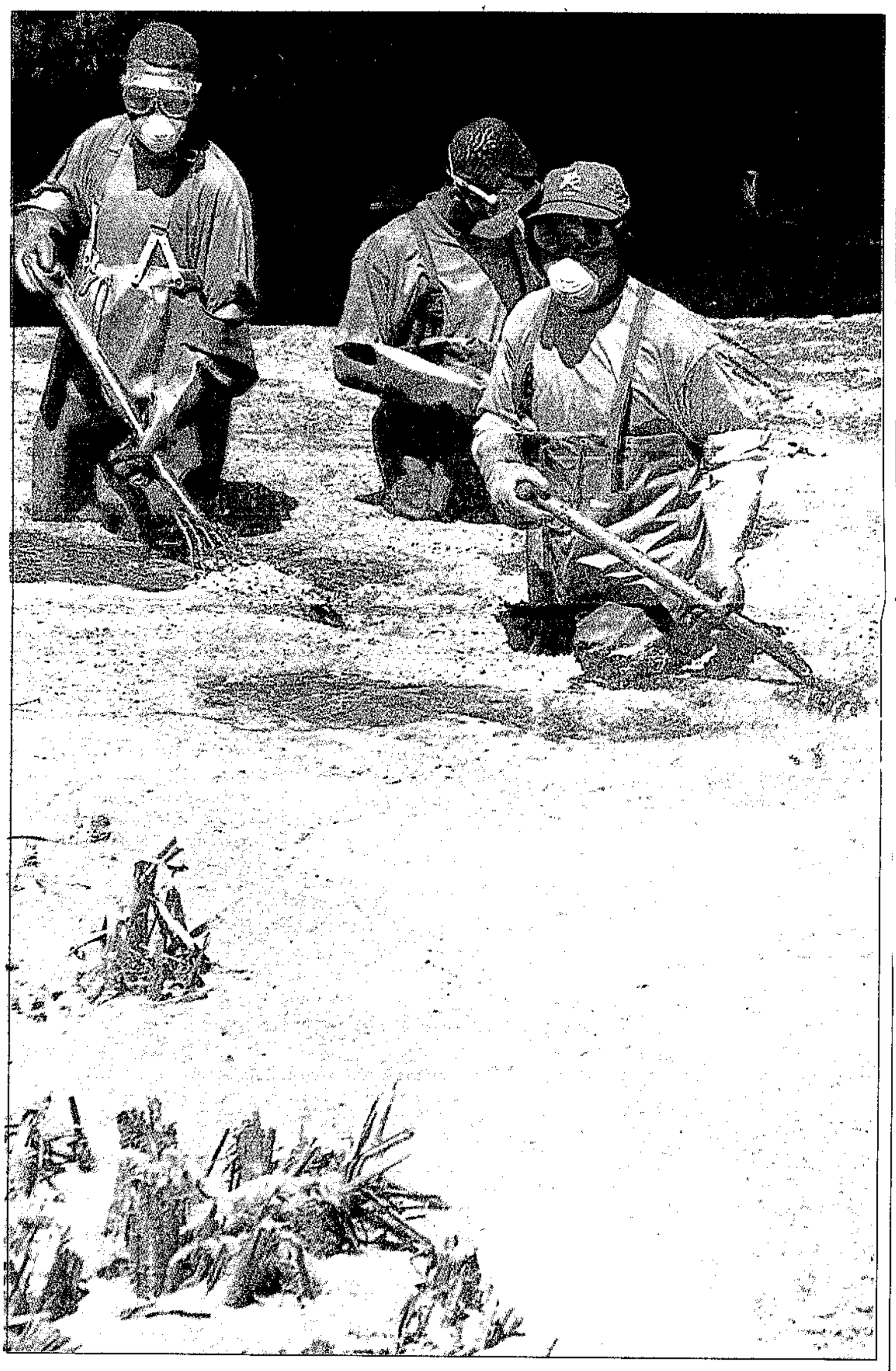
The spill, which has already cost about R500 000 to clean up, highlights the lack of a planned system to pick up industrial spills. Although the spill happened two weeks ago, the pollution control company is still cleaning it up and is likely to finish only today.

Water Affairs were tipped off about it only at 4.30pm on February 13. They informed the Cape Metropolitan Council, who commissioned a hazardous material cleaning company to sort it out. The clean-up company arrived on the scene at 6.30pm.

Now the parties involved are pointing fingers at each other, and the *Cape Times* has uncovered a series of conflicting accounts.

Here is what they said:

● Charmfit, the company on whose premises the spill occurred, said they had telephoned the Epping fire department around 12.20pm soon after the spill as they were worried about a fire risk.



DIRTY WORK: Cleaners clad in waders and masks enter the Jakkalsvlei River to rake up the Spillsorb after it has sucked up the oil from the spill. *PICTURE: ALAN TAYLOR*

Financial director Mr Ian Taverner said the fire department had taken 40 minutes to arrive.

"They saw no fire and disappeared before anyone could talk to them," he said. Charmfit had taken the premises over from Florida Clothing Ltd, who used the furnace oil for their boiler. They had commissioned Apple Group to do the renovations to the site and had told them to remove the fuel tank as they had no use for it.

"Then we left it up to them. It had nothing to do with us, it was in the hands of the contractor," Taverner said. He said only 9 000 litres had been spilled.

● Epping fire department's computer log shows they got the call at 12.21pm and arrived at 12.27pm.

The log states: "False alarm with good intent. A small quantity of diesel spillage. Spillage under the supervision of company chemist."

The officer in charge said they had been told that only a "few litres" had gone down the drains.

They covered the stormwater drain and left. Spokesperson Mr Ian Schnetler said if they had been told it was 18 000 litres of heavy furnace oil they would have treated it as an emergency. "If we're given false information, we cannot be held responsible," he said.

● Apple Group spokesperson Mr Ivor Mumford said he had hired sub-contractors to do some of the work, including Levenbach Building and Roofing.

"The tank belonged to Shell and was used by the previous tenant. It was disconnected when the boiler was removed and was supposed to be empty," he said.

The man who removed the piping that caused the spill was from "some plumbing company". He said only about 3 000 litres had spilled. "No one can tell me who said the tank was empty."

● Florida Clothing, the previous tenants, said they had first heard of the spill from the *Cape Times*. They said they had told Shell they were leaving last October and that Shell should remove the tank as the new tenants didn't want it. Shell had said they could do this only in January.

"It was not our responsibility. And we never told anyone the tank was empty," a spokesperson said.

● Shell area manager Mr Robert Hall said he had arranged with Charmfit's maintenance manager to remove the tank in January.

"But then one of the contractors started fiddling with it." He said about 12 000 litres had spilled. Shell said in a statement that Levenbach had removed the pipe "without the knowledge or permission of Shell. Levenbach accepted responsibility and liability" and would pay for the clean up.

● Levenbach spokesperson Mr Graham Minor said they had been led to believe the tank was empty. He said he did not know who had told them it was empty. He would not comment on Shell's accusation.

● The Cape Metropolitan Council blames the Epping fire department for not notifying them, and the contractors for not checking if the tank was empty.

No local authorities or Water Affairs were told.

The dangers of heavy furnace fuel

● Heavy furnace oil can cause cancer if people are exposed to it for long periods.
● In confined spaces the vapour from the fuel can cause pneumonia, cataracts and dermatitis.
● A spill into water can travel long distances.
● The vapour is heavier than air and hangs just above the oil. In confined spaces the vapour forces out the oxygen.
● The oil is flammable with a high "flashpoint" range, meaning a fire can travel fast along the length of the spill.
● Clean-up staff have to wear breathing apparatus and oxygen tanks in confined spaces.

Alien plants a major threat to Kruger Park

Star 26/2/98 (56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environmental Reporter

Jobless from surrounding communities paid to clear large tracts

The biggest threat to the ecosystem of the Kruger National Park is the alien sour prickly pear which has spread so rapidly it is estimated that it now covers 65 000ha of parkland.

The prickly pear, introduced as an ornamental plant in 1953, along with 213 other exotic plants, poses a huge problem for staff.

The aliens smother indigenous plants and have a serious impact on the water supply. As a result water-flows have been reduced in rivers, such as the Levuvhu, and once perennial rivers have become seasonal with extended periods of no flow.

Wayne Lotter, the park's working-for-water project manager, said: "By the time we became conscious of the problem it was out of hand. We were close to being too late in the Kruger, if we had waited another year or two.

"We will need at least R1-million a year for the next 10 years to stay on top of the problem."

The park recently received aid from the Netherlands government to the tune of R1-million for the next three years. A further R3-million was also donated to clear Lake St Lucia, in KwaZulu Natal, of invading aliens.

The Kruger Park has also received R150-million from the Government's poverty relief fund, to cover labour intensive work by unemployed people from the surrounding communities to clear tracts of the park .

Workers in protective clothes inject herbicide into the stems of individual plants. Because of the vast area the plants cover and because they spread so rapidly it is possible that some of the alien species will be overlooked.

"We will never be able to rid the park of all the alien plants. But we can and must keep them under strict control," said working-for-water scientific adviser Brian van Wilgen.

The plants also affect rural communities in Mozambique who depend on water from the rivers flowing from the park. To help prevent the spread of aliens, game rangers are now required to report sightings of the plants.

mmitted government to negotiating aper retrenchments, Maharaj said: "The bility to end unnecessary jobs means t most of the hoped for savings remain ealised."

The government had hoped, through ra-

were not properly skilled.

Managing human resources in the public service would occupy "centre stage" this year. "We have to radically change a public service designed to support a privileged minority and repress the aspirations of the majority," Maharaj said.

Protected house torn down as it was 'structurally unstable' — firm

Deborah Fine (56) BD 27/2/98

JOHANNESBURG property developer Summercon has claimed that it tore down a 78-year-old house protected under national heritage legislation because structural engineers had declared the foundations and brickwork "structurally unstable".

The National Monuments Council confirmed on Wednesday that it would lay a charge with the SA Police Service against Summercon because the company had violated the National Monuments Act by demolishing the house without permission to make way for town houses at a site in Saxonwold, north of Johannesburg's city centre.

The act stipulated that structures older than 50 years could not be demolished or altered without a special permit from the council, which Summercon had failed to obtain.

The house was built in 1924 and was owned by prominent Johannesburg mining engineer, the late Alpheus Gardner Williams.

Council regional manager Johan Bruwer described it as "a beautiful old house which may have been worthy of preservation because of its architectural merits".

Summercon said yesterday that it had "acted in good faith at all times", and had torn down the house without realising that consent from the council was necessary.

Summercon said it had handed the matter over to its attorneys.

Saxonwold ward councillor Mike Moriarty claimed, however, that Summercon had been aware that they were not entitled to demolish the house because they had been informed of this by the townships board.

He alleged that the board had granted Summercon the right to erect townhouses on erven 15 and 16, Saxonwold, last year.

However, the board had explicitly stated in writing that the firm was restricted from demolishing the existing house at the site.

Summercon had agreed last year not to tear down the house, he claimed.

Moriarty said that on the recommendation of the township board, the company had to apply for a demolition permit before it could demolish anything.

"I shall not rest until Summercon has been prosecuted," he said.

Comment: Page 13

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operative governance.

"One should not conflate problems with capacity and implementation with those of power and function. There is no evidence to suggest we need to

parliamentary schedule this year to cater for a new local government dispensation; provincial systems; intergovernmental relations and systems of co-operative governance; and the

Oil spill: charges possible

CT 27/1/98 (176)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

WATER AFFAIRS Minister Kader Asmal has said his department may prosecute those responsible for the oil spill in Epping Industria.

Asmal said in a statement yesterday he had asked his regional director, Mr Rashid Khan, for a full report on the matter.

"Mr Khan has told me that, depending on the outcome of the inquiry that he already has in hand, the matter will be turned over to the attorney-general for prosecution of any parties suspected of having committed criminal offences," Asmal said.

He said the department was the custodian of the nation's water resources and bore heavy responsibility to ensure that the safety and health of the public were not endangered in any way by pollution or other causes.

CUSTODIAN: Kader Asmal

The National Party said yesterday that the negligence in reporting the pollution incident was "totally unacceptable".

"There is clearly a lack of pollution control systems which must be rectified immediately," the party said.

The spill on February 12 of 18 000 litres of heavy furnace oil, a toxic substance which may cause cancer and is lethal to aquatic life, was not reported to the local authorities or to the Department of Water Affairs by any of the companies which knew of the spill.

The local fire brigade were called, but when they arrived, most of the oil had already gone down the stormwater drains. They were told by people on site "only a few litres of diesel" had been spilled and that it was under control.

It appears there was an attempt to cover up the spill, as Water Affairs only heard about it 30 hours later after an anonymous tip-off.

By then the oil had flowed down the stormwater system and into the Jakkalsvlei River, a distance of about two kilometres. A cleaning-up company contained it before it flowed into the Black River and into Table Bay.

Council confirms filing a charge against Summercon

(56) BD 3/3/98

Deborah Fine

THE National Monuments Council confirmed yesterday that it had filed a charge with the SA Police Service against Johannesburg property developer Summercon for the demolition of a 74-year-old house in contravention of national heritage legislation.

The council's regional manager, Johan Bruwer, said the charge had been lodged yesterday at Rosebank police station, north of Johannesburg.

Summercon was accused of destroying the house to make way for townhouses at a site in the suburb of Saxonwold in violation of the National Monuments Act which prohibited the demolition of structures older than 50 years without a permit. The firm allegedly failed to obtain such a permit before it tore down the house.

Saxonwold residents have expressed outrage at the destruction of the house, which was built in 1924 and originally owned by prominent Johannesburg mining engineer, the late Alpheus Gardner Williams. Bruwer said he had received numerous telephone calls supporting legal action against Summercon.

He said police would have to investigate the case and submit a docket to the Johannesburg Magistrates' Court for consideration. It was up to the court to decide whether prosecution was warranted. The maximum penalty for contravening the act was a R10 000 fine, two years' imprisonment or both.

Summercon has claimed that the house was structurally unstable and that the firm was not aware that a National Monuments Council permit was required in order to demolish it.

SA Residential Developers' Association executive director Hendrik Kekana said yesterday that developers had to be "called to order to prevent the unnecessary destruction of our environment and heritage in pursuit of profits".

Saxonwold ward councillor Mike Moriarty said that he had asked the council to pursue alternative legal action forcing Summercon to rebuild the house.

Architectural heritage is turning to rubble

(56) Star 3/3/98

Company could face music for 'illegal' demolition of building

By Anna Cox

South Africa's heritage is under siege from property developers who are fast destroying the country's historical sites and national monuments.

A huge number of these buildings and sites are being threatened by developers who indiscriminately demolish buildings without seeking permission from the National Monuments Council (NMC), according to assistant registrar Janet de Jager.

She said this was leading to the destruction of the architecture, heritage, social history and character of cities.

The main cities affected were Johannesburg and Cape Town, but the trend was becoming a huge and worrying problem, De Jager said.

This week, the NMC decided to lay a charge of illegal demolition against a construction company which demolished a house in Saxonwold. It also refused to grant a back-dated permit for the demolition.

The company, Summercon, was granted permission in 1996 to build townhouses on two stands in the residential area, but were restricted from demolishing the existing house because it was protected by the National Monuments' Act. The company allegedly demolished the house despite protests from residents.

A complaint was laid by Greater Johannesburg's Eastern councillor Mike Moriarty, who want to see the NMC take severe action against the company.

But, the company, Summercon, claimed it demolished the house on the advice of structural engineers who said "the house was structurally unsound".

Spokesman Bruce Peach said the company was also unaware that such demolition required the prior consent of the NMC and that the matter was being handled by the company's attorneys.

However, Moriarty said: "We must get tough to stop wanton destruction of our heritage. They demolished the house in flagrant violation of their restrictions. The only way developers will learn to respect the law is if they are made to suffer a penalty."

The company now has the right to apply for a permit from the NMC's regional committee. If it is refused, it can appeal to the national committee and as a last resort to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Lionel Mtshali. If these avenues fail, the company could be prosecuted. The maximum penalty is s R10 000.

New legislation, which is about to be promulgated, provides for fines up to R1-million, which should act as a bigger deterrent, de Jager said.

According the National Monuments Act, permission is required to demolish any building which is older than 50 years. Last year several companies were fined and were made to re-erect the buildings they demolished, De Jager said.

Sites which have been destroyed are the Colosseum, Joel House (Barney Barnato's house pulled down in 1962), Hohenheim House (a Victorian mansion built by Lionel Phillips in 1894 in Parktown and demolished in 1972), Pen-y-Bryn (one of Parktown's grandest homes, demolished in 1960), the Bijou Theatre (built 1910 in Jeppe Street and demolished 1960), Majestic Mansions (an elegant block of flats demolished in 1971), Murray Gordon Mansions in Westcliff (pulled down 1975) and the New Kleinfontein mine house (built in 1892 and pulled down in the 1960s).

World listing for SA sites

Some of South Africa's most important historical sites could soon be listed on the World Heritage list. The roll of honour names 500 sites around the world which are offered protection by the World Heritage Convention.

Deputy director general of environment affairs, Dr Tanya Abrahams, will chair the meeting at the Kirstenbosch Research Centre in Cape Town today to decide on the names of sites to be submitted.

The meeting will be attended by provincial representatives and officials of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

Restricted trade the only way to give Cites teeth

(56)

Is Cites, the organisation formed to prevent illegal trade in endangered species, a paper tiger? asks Gisela Ostwald

BD 5/3/98

recently tried to smuggle 11 live pythons out of the country strapped to their bodies. A Belgian about to board a flight from Brazil had 130 hummingbirds hidden beneath the false bottom of his bag when he was caught.

If successful, smuggling endangered species can bring quick profit. A rare Amazonian parrot, bought from the local who trapped it for $2, is easily worth $500 to $1 000 in the US. The skeleton of a single tiger earns Asian dealers more than an average worker can make in 10 years of hard effort.

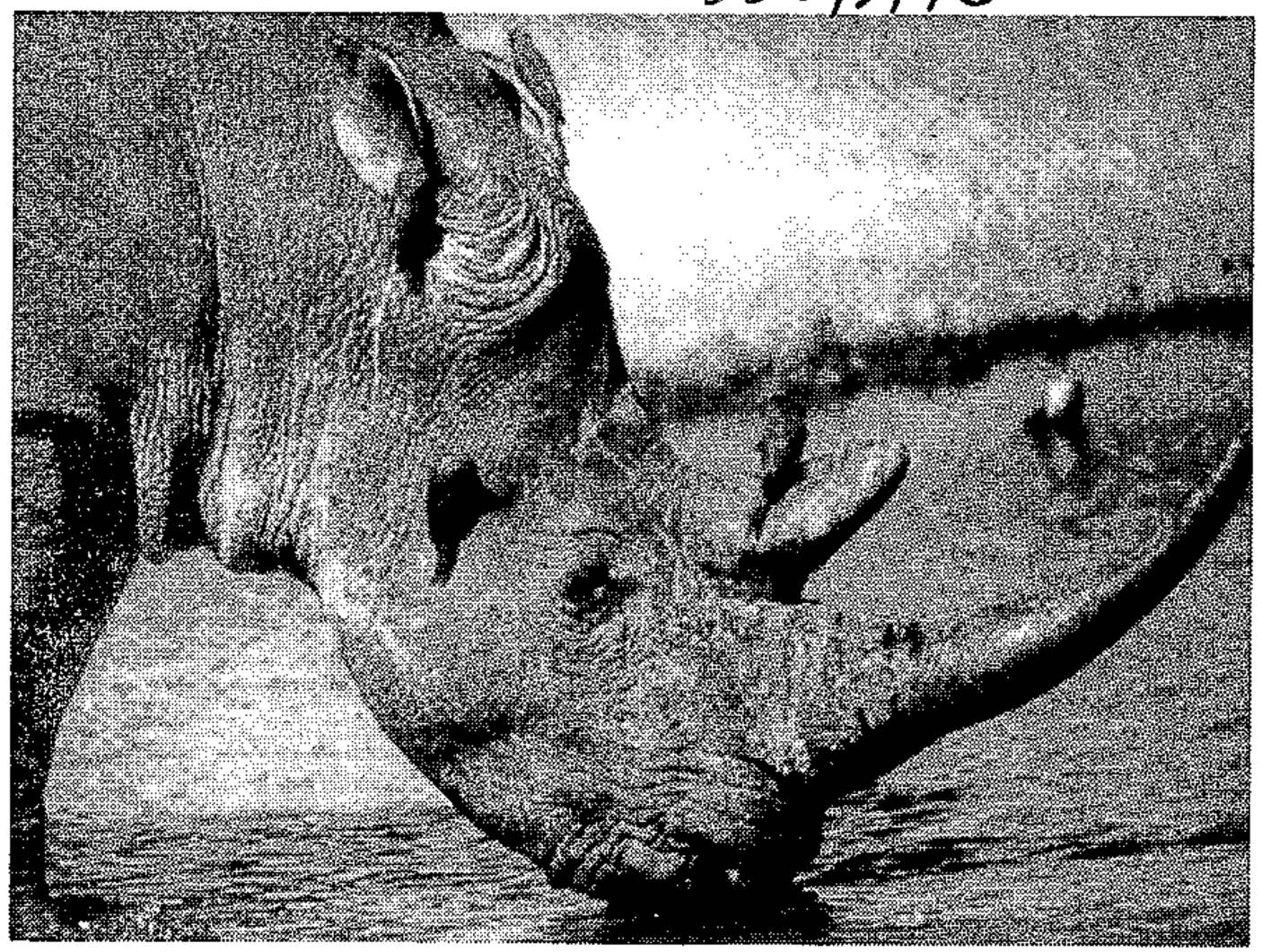
In a letter signed by seven wildlife organisations, conservationists have demanded that Cites is made more effective as a conservation tool and more relevant to people who live alongside wildlife.

Cites' success is often wrongly measured by its number of member states and the amount of strictly protected species, wildlife organisations complain. They say that people often forget to take into account Cites decrees and their effect on the animals and people they concern.

One problem is that endangered species often offer no financial benefit to rural populations in developing countries and appear instead to be a burden. Author Wilbur Smith has described the value of an endangered species to an African farmer: "The buffaloes graze on the grass he needs for his cattle, a crocodile killed his grandmother and the leopard is killing his goats." The farmer would protect these species only if it brought him financial benefit, Smith said.

His suggestion was to allow restricted hunting and trading in endangered species and to share the profit with the locals.

Many conservation organisations confirm that the greatest threat to wild plants and animals is not illegal trade, but the loss of natural habitat. In many developing countries, this can be stopped or turned around only if the endangered species gain a greater economic worth by restricted but legal trade. — Sapa-DPA.



In spite of Cites, the number of African black rhinoceroses plummeted 95%, yet conservationists do not consider the convention to be a complete failure

Hunting earns Eastern Cape R38,5m (56)

BD 5/3/98

GRAHAMSTOWN — Professional hunting earned the Eastern Cape R38,5m between November 1996 and October last year.

Mike Fryer of the economic affairs, environment and tourism department's directorate of nature conservation said this income was generated by the province's 307 professional hunters, who hosted 492 clients for 4 000 days.

Hunting took place on provincial, local and private reserves and farms. An overwhelming 63% of the clients were from the US. They accounted for 2 320 of the 3 793 trophy animals shot.

Clients paid an average of R2 237 a trophy animal killed as well as R1 715 a day. Nonhunting clients accompanying the hunters paid R980 a day.

The total value of animals hunted and daily rates paid to the professional hunters amounted to about R16m in this period, he said.

In addition, hunting clients had "interacted with the business sector" to the tune of R22,5m.

This amount included staff tips of R1,7m, taxidermy expenses of R4,9m, travel and accommodation costs of R5,8m and curio purchases of R98 000.

The most common animal hunted in the Eastern Cape was the springbok, with 676 killed. However, the full spectrum of wildlife had been hunted.

Also bagged were four giraffe, 13 bat-eared foxes, 11 baboons and one leguaan. — ECN.

THE STAR

Hazard: a worker in protective clothing cleans the road after a truck carrying drums of toxic chemicals dropped some of its load on the N12 near Boksburg yesterday

Chemical time-bomb on SA roads

ARG 5/3/98

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT (56)

Johannesburg – Insufficient controls regulating the transportation of hazardous materials, including toxic waste, on South Africa's roads have made the country vulnerable to a major chemical disaster, authorities have warned.

The warnings come in the wake of yesterday's chemical spill on the N12 highway near Boksburg.

A number of 210-litre drums of granulated dichlorophenol fell off a vehicle belonging to Enviroserve's operational division, Waste-Tech, spilling their contents on the highway. The drums were resealed and the road washed.

Waste-Tech marketing manager Alain Sauvage said the chemical was not lethal unless ingested.

Louis du Toit of the SA Bureau of Standards said there had been a number of incidents with the potential for big disasters.

"We are waiting for a big incident to happen," he said.

No long-term effects from E Rand mishap

By Gasant Abarder

The chemical spill of 600 litres of dichlorophenol on the N12 highway near Boksburg yesterday could cause skin irritations, burning of eyes and breathing problems, but no problems in the long run, according to Wits University professor of organic chemistry Professor Jo Michaels.

Dichlorophenol (DCP) is used for mothproofing and in antiseptics and seed disinfectants.

Michaels said the chemical was almost insoluble in water.

One gram, however, could be dissolved by a gram of 95% proof ethanol (alcohol) but this was not practical because ethanol is flammable.

DCP is also soluble in ether and alkaline solutions, he said.

The company which cleaned up the spill opted for a cheap but safe method.

Lime, an alkaline, was used to absorb the spilt dichlorophenol from the road surface.

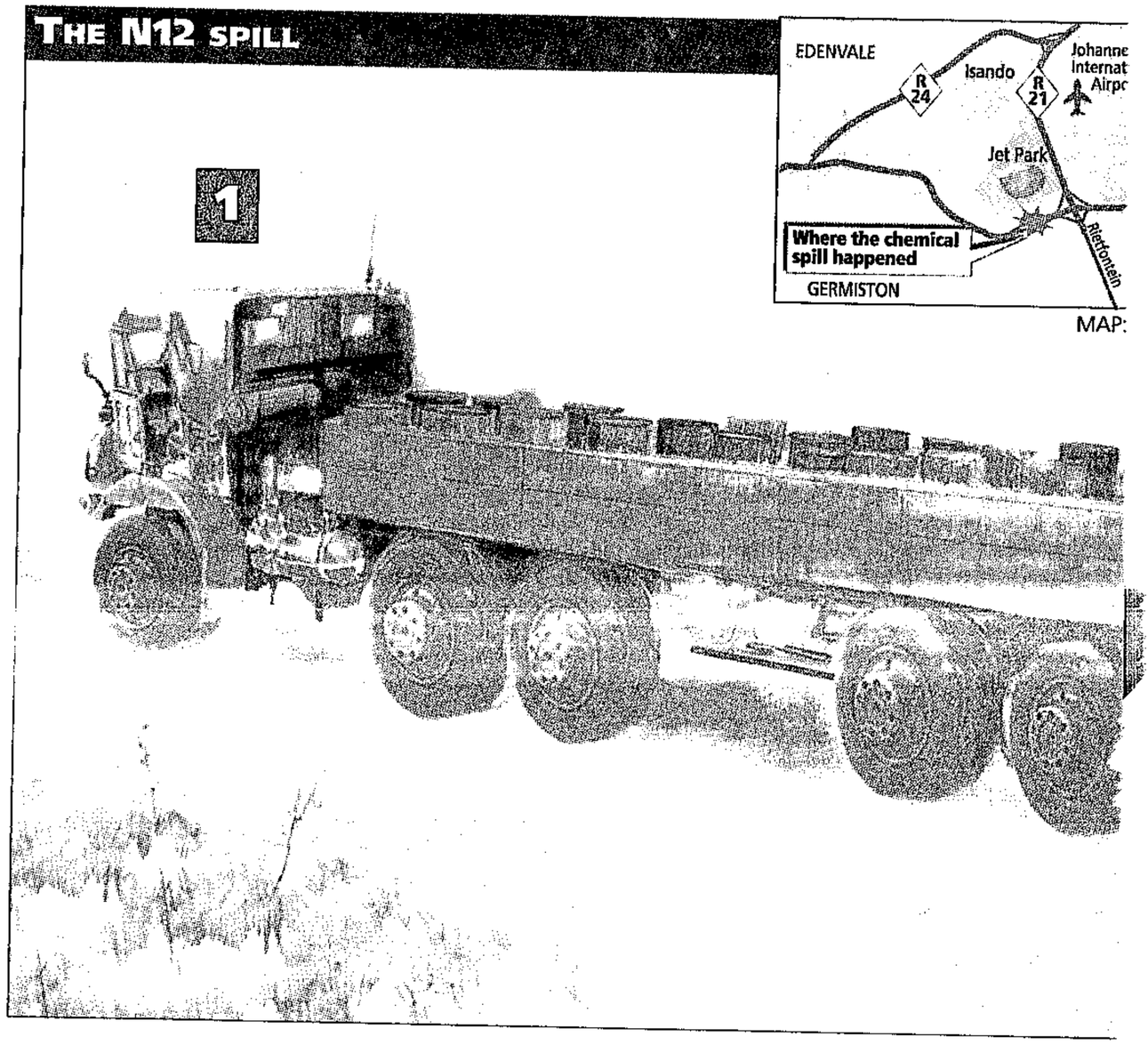
"This is probably the most sensible way of cleaning up the spill. You neutralise the DCP with the lime and then scrape away the residue," Michaels said.

"There would be no long-term health problems, but such a large concentrate of the chemical will mean irritations of the skin and burning of the eyes, and it may even cause burns on the skin. It has a caustic nature, and people have cause to be concerned.

"The local plant life will also deteriorate," Michaels said.

He added that he was "not too terribly happy" with the idea of the dichlorophenol being transported in an open truck and said he would have chosen a closed tanker to move the chemical.

THE N12 SPILL



MAP:

Potential death-on-whe

Killer cargoes are crossing the land every day, and if something

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Millions of litres of hazardous chemicals, including poisons, radioactive materials, explosives and flammable liquids, are transported on the country's roads daily, yet there is no adequate legislation in place to determine safety precautions.

And there are not enough enforcers to ensure that even limited controls are in place.

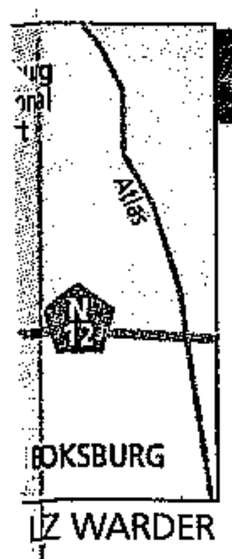
Concern about the transportation of hazardous materials was echoed yesterday after the N12 near Boksburg was closed for seven hours while a team cleared up a spill of hazardous dichlorophenol.

The chemical was being transported in drums on the back of a truck. Several fell off when the driver swerved to avoid another vehicle.

A Department of Transport inspectorate official admitted yesterday that legislation on the movement of hazardous materials was inadequate.

According to a department spokesman, a first offender can expect a maximum fine of R500 or six months' jail, a second offender R1 000 or 12 months' jail and a third offender R2 000 or 24 months' jail, irrespective of the extent of a spill or the potential health and environmental hazard.

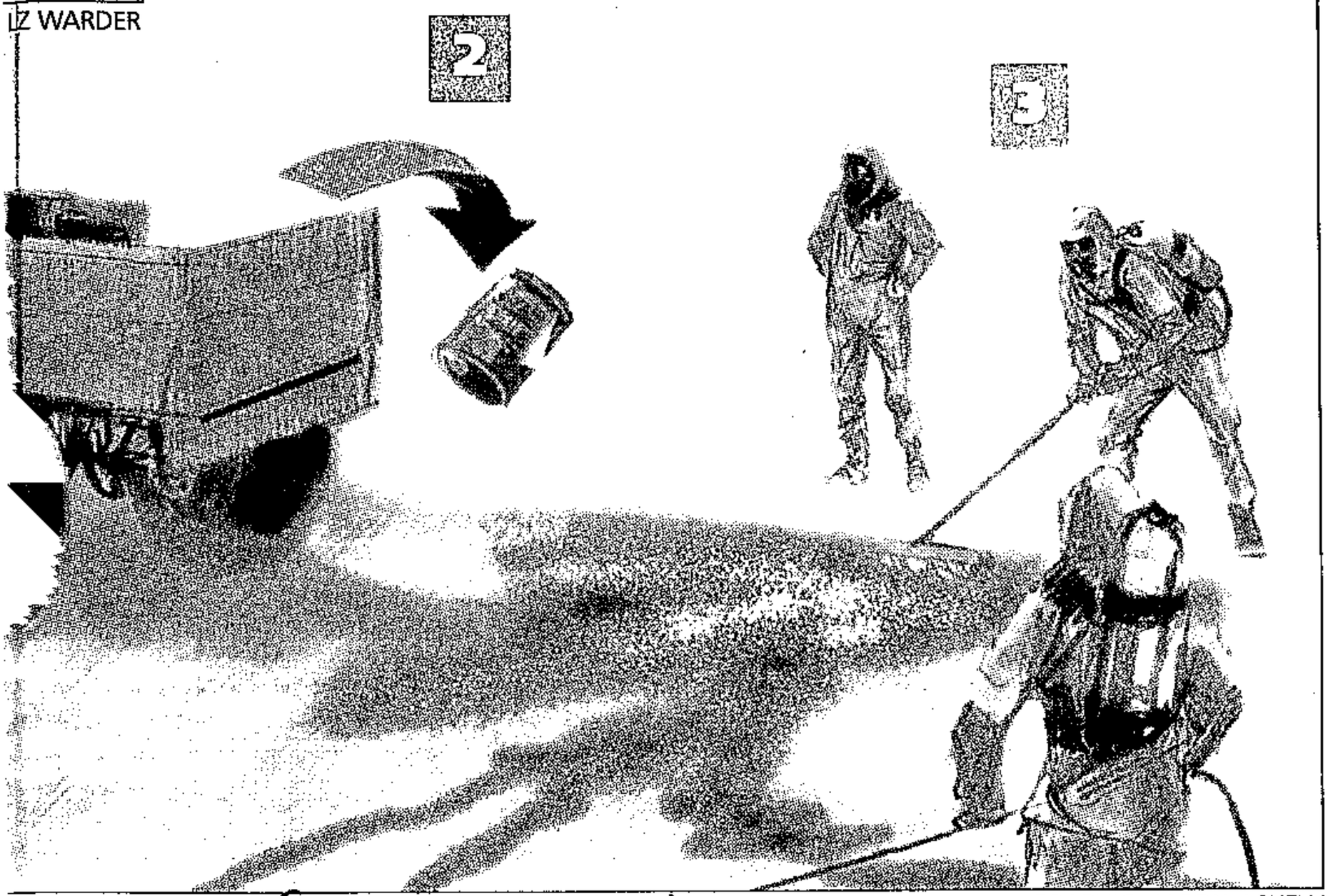
Group for Environmental



LIZ WARDER

How the chemicals were cleaned up

1 The chemical dichlorophenol, stored in drums, is in the process of being transported in an open truck.
2 Three of the drums fall off the truck and cause a spillage.
3 Emergency workers, wearing protective clothing and gas masks, clean up the spill by using lime-an alkali solution that neutralises dichlorophenol. The residue is then scraped away.



GRAPHIC: JASON ASKEW

(56) Star 5/3/98

els trundles over SA

goes wrong the penalties start at only R500

Monitoring spokesman Heshina Rukato said last night they had been waiting for months to get the Government to enforce tougher legislation, "but it seems the Government has not taken to the idea".

"Anyone can do almost anything. There is not enough legislation and not enough enforcers of the law."

She added that the problem had not been given enough emphasis by the Transport of Hazardous Wastes Act.

"We have been waiting for about six months for the White Paper on Waste Management to be legislated into official policy," she said.

A spokesman for the Department of Transport said they were waiting on individual provinces to finalise their road transport bills, which would incorporate regulatory controls for the transport of hazardous waste.

"There are regulations in place but they only apply specifically to road tankers," she added.

According to Jay Singh, spokesman for the Department of Environmental Affairs, the Department of Transport was held responsible for any policy regarding the transport of dangerous goods by land, while the provincial departments would be held responsible for monitoring it.

A cleanup of a chemical spill can cost anything from R1 000 to R1-million.

Crisis centre set up after chemical spill

By Anso Thom
Health Reporter

Waste-Tech's chemical plant has created a crisis centre manned by a doctor and chemical experts to deal with people who believe they might have come into contact with a hazardous chemical substance spilt near Boksburg yesterday.

Experts at Waste-Tech said people should avoid coming into contact with the substance, dichlorophenol, which could cause burning eyes, redness, irritation and blistering of the skin similar to that caused by an acid burn, and shortness of breath.

All these symptoms should gradually subside once the person ceases contact with the substance. Asthmatics could become more prone to asthma attacks.

A doctor at the Red Cross Children's Poison Centre agreed that the most common symptom is a skin rash. Secondary symptoms are nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, and jaundice in extreme cases.

"The best thing to do is to wash the substance off with water," she said.

"According to my information, a person has to be exposed to about 2 000mg per kg before being in any danger," Boksburg emergency officer Marius Atterbury added. He had had no complaints from personnel who visited the scene, but many members of the public had phoned and had been referred to Waste-Tech.

The telephone number for the crisis centre at Rietfontein is (011) 456-5435, and after hours 082-554-5501 or 083-377-3116. Waste-Tech marketing manager Alain Sauvage and Dr Tony Saner will field calls.

ANDREAS VLACHAKIS

Dangerous ... a member of a hazardous-chemicals team cleans up a section of the N12 after several drums containing hazardous chemicals fell off a truck. (56)

Chemical spill on N12 highway near Boksburg prompts experts to warn of looming disaster

Star 5/3/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Insufficient controls regulating the transportation of hazardous materials, including toxic waste, on South Africa's roads have made the country vulnerable to a major chemical disaster, authorities have warned.

The warnings come in the wake of yesterday's chemical spill on the N12 highway near Boksburg.

A vehicle belonging to Enviroserve's operational division, Waste-Tech, transporting 70 210l drums of granulated dichlorophenol, swerved and caused several of the drums to fall off and spill their contents on the highway.

Waste-Tech marketing manager Alain Sauvage said the chemical is not lethal unless ingested.

Boksburg fire department operations officer Colin Deiner said the drums had been resealed, the spilt chemical sucked up and the road washed.

Asked to comment, Louis du Toit of the SABS said there had been a number of incidents with the potential to be disasters.

"We are waiting for a big incident to happen," he said.

Environmental groups have been lobbying for better legislation to control the transportation of hazardous waste.

Under current legislation first-time offenders face maximum fines of only R500 if found guilty of causing a chemical spill.

▶ More reports, graphic
Page 6

Locals pay price for foreign mining

(56) (~~210~~)

Star 6/3/98

Soil is contaminated and profits lost to the community, writes Lewis Machipisa in Accra

Communities located in mining areas are paying a heavy social and environmental price for the increased mining activities on the continent, according to reports from African non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Commercial mining has led to environmental degradation, the displacement of people from communities where they have lived for years, and a higher incidence of lung diseases among populations.

Often mine sites are contaminated beyond restoration, according to participants at a recent meeting on "Mining, Society and Environment" in the Ghanaian capital of Accra organised by the Africa office of the Third World Network (TWN-Af), a development NGO.

The effect of mining activities on the society and the environment has received little attention from African governments and mining transnational corporations (TNCs).

"Presently, the benefits from mining tend to stay with the TNCs, while the negative consequences like pollution of water and soil, which may threaten the livelihood of surrounding communities, stay within the country," says a briefing paper at the meeting.

Mining is one sector that has attracted huge sums of foreign direct investment (FDI) worldwide.

From 1985 to 1995, there were $3,5-billion (about R17,5-billion) of new investment in emerging-market mining projects, but in the last two years alone, there have been $8-billion (about R39-billion) in new deals, according to an NGO that provides information on the policies of the multilateral development banks.

This increased investment has gone hand-in-hand with initiatives meant to encourage foreign investment – by the end of 1995, at least 35 countries had radically relaxed their mining codes.

"Indeed, so intense is the desire for foreign direct investment that African leaders have literally fallen over each other to create the incentives and establish the investor confidence necessary to attract FDI," Charles Abugre of the Third World Network told the meeting.

"There is a growing perception of collusion between the state and mining companies in a singular drive for investment ... and that this collusion has little sensitivity to social and environmental accountability or responsibility.

"Social impacts are the most abused. More often than not, communities are not involved during the baseline studies, nor do they have the capacity to conduct such studies independently," he added.

"Consequently, the companies end up prescribing compensation and relocation schemes which usually do not take sufficient account of socio-cultural circumstances."

Kofi Arhin, an industrial relations officer with the Ghana Mineworkers' Union in Tarkwa, western Ghana, agreed. "What we are seeing is that the relationship between the communities and mining companies is going to be really nasty," he said. "The mining companies are not doing anything to help people.

"They are retrenching people and taking away people's farms. We expect the mining companies to be indulging in activities that help the communities. As more workers get retrenched as a result of the poor gold price, the situation will turn ugly and government and the companies had better find ways of helping the communities," warned Arhin.

For Arhin, complaining to government is a waste of time because when "we mention these things, the government says we are scaring away investors."

In South Africa, the situation is similar.

"The government is being driven by the Chamber of Mines. The community is under pressure from the chamber and is being locked out.

"What the chamber wants in South Africa is a situation where everything is discussed by all except the communities," noted Matthews Hlabane of the South Africa Environment Monitoring Group.

"In some cases mining takes place within a 100m (of homes), blasting and all. Houses are cracking."

South Africa, which has the world's largest gold reserves, has a Health and Safety Act, but, lamented Hlabane, it excludes the community "totally". – Sapa-IPS

DEATH FEAR OVER TOXIC SHELLFISH

Cape consumers get poison warning

(56) ~~FISHING~~.

ARG 7/3/98

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WARING

Lethal poison "as dangerous as cobra venom" is seeping from a toxic Peninsula vlei and threatening the lives of thousands of people who eat shellfish affected by the poison.

Following an emergency meeting yesterday the South Peninsula Municipality has warned people against eating perlemoen, crayfish and especially black mussels found near or in the Kommetjie mussel beds.

Hundreds of people regularly collect shellfish in the area and some of it is sold to the public and to restaurants.

Eating the poisoned seafood could result in death, experts have warned.

The municipality has also warned people not to come into contact with the highly toxic algae that has formed on the Wildevoëlvlei, which is the source of the scare.

Shellfish in the popular Kommetjie mussel beds have become so poisonous that anyone eating seafood collected there could die, experts have warned.

"Mussels found in the beds where the Wildevoëlvlei goes into the sea must not be collected or eaten as they are potentially lethal," said Professor Bryan Davies of the University of Cape Town's freshwater research unit.

He said toxic algae in the vlei affected all filter feeders in the vicinity of the estuary. He also advised people not to collect perlemoen and crayfish, which could also be affected even though their feeding methods were different.

The shellfish have become toxic as a result of contamination from water flowing from Wildevoëlvlei into the sea.

The rapid multiplication of blue-green algae, which belongs to a group of bacteria-producing toxins as lethal as cobra venom which can kill in minute quantities, caused the vlei to become toxic.

Professor Davies said it appeared that an unexplained event at the end of last year had killed the usual water plants. These plants had made way for the blue-green algae, which multiplied rapidly, making the vlei toxic.

He warned people to stay away from the water's edge and estuary mouth.

Professor Davies is in a team of experts drawing up a land-use management plan for the Noordhoek Valley.

A spokesman for the Kommetjie Environmental Awareness Group said signs had been put up in Ocean View and Kommetjie warning residents of the dangers of collecting mussels.

He said mussels formed a major part of the diet of many local residents, but so fa there had been no reports of poisoning.

Residents near the shores of the vlei fea for their health and for the safety of thei animals.

Ian Kloppers, whose garden abuts th vlei, said he and his wife were extremel concerned because they were unsur whether the poison could be airborne.

He said the algae was known to kill an mals if ingested and this put the pets a risk.

A further concern to residents was th dramatic decrease in birdlife over the pas six months.

Mr Kloppers said that when birdin enthusiasts visited the vlei six months ag they counted more than 400 grebes in morning. Now it was unusual to see 10.

"Fish have died and we no longer see th osprey or the clawless otters," he said.

Experts are hoping to rehabilitate th vlei. One of the methods under considera tion is to reduce the level of the vlei, whicl would upset the growth pattern of the algae.

To do this, the outflow into the sea woul be kept open, resulting in the mussel bed near the estuary remaining toxic. Warnin signs would be kept in place until monitor ing of the mussels showed they were n longer toxic.

Deadly gases made near homes

(56)

Star 7/3/98

By JACKIE CAMERON

A facility which produces deadly chemical warfare compounds has sprung up in the middle of Gauteng's fastest-growing residential and industrial area.

Armscor subsidiary Protechnik, set up secretly in the apartheid era, has moved its facility to Centurion, where it is expected to produce some of the world's deadliest chemical warfare agents.

Angry town councillor Frans Smith said residents and business people knew nothing about Protechnik's plans and he would demand an investigation into how the company received permission to shift its premises to his area.

The facility, built at Highveld Techno Park last year, is less than 1km away from an upmarket housing development and close to the N1 highway.

Protechnik obtained permission from the Centurion Town Council last year to conduct research and for the "moderate manufacturing" of chemicals to use in testing defensive chemical warfare equipment.

Protechnik was manufacturing mustard gas, among other agents, at its Magaliesberg facility which was recently inspected by international experts to ensure that the area had not been contaminated after the facility shut its doors there, Armscor said this week.

Centurion emergency services personnel admitted they could not guarantee the safety of residents and people working in the area if there was seepage from the premises, but said they had equipment to protect their own staff.

TO PAGE 2

Human blood dumped in Table Bay

BOBBY JORDAN

HUMAN blood from Cape Town's Salt River mortuary is being washed into Table Bay through the storm-water drainage system, causing alarm in health circles.

The human resources head of the Salt River Medico-Legal Laboratory, Captain Rico Schouten, confirmed that the facility had become a serious health hazard.

Staff could no longer cope with the estimated 4 200 bodies brought there annually, he said.

Outdated equipment, poor salaries and demotivated staff had resulted in an unacceptable level of health and safety at the morgue and occasional "slip-ups", where blood sometimes overflowed into the storm-water drainage system, which flows into the bay, he said.

Schouten said the appalling conditions at the morgue meant safety contraventions were "virtually impossible to avoid".

"Leakages occur. Storm water is definitely affected. We've already had blood overflowing and running down the street," he said.

Other problems included faulty storage facilities. "After installation in the mid-90s, it was noticed that the fridges delivered by the contractors were not deep-freeze units, but normal refrigerators. They decided to use them anyway.

"But the end result is that whereas body-storage temperature should be about minus 3°C, it's actually at about 10°C. That means the condition of many bodies gets a lot worse after police take possession of them."

Although most human remains were collected and incinerated in line with medical safety standards, the mess generated by incoming bodies and inadequate freezer facilities was virtually impossible to manage, he said.

The health crisis at the morgue prompted an official warning to the police service, which runs the morgue, from a government health inspector who visited it on Friday.

Provincial police spokesman Senior Superintendent John Sterrenberg confirmed the police had received a "contravention notice" in terms of the Health and Occupational Safety Act that was "being processed".

Specialist forensic pathologists who conduct all postmortems at the state's mortuaries also criticised the mortuary service, saying their task was like "working on a battlefield". Most state morgues were in a similar state of disrepair, they said.

Said Dr Gert Simon of the Pretoria state morgue: "We have about 18 000 unnatural deaths a year, by far the highest incidence in the world, but only 15 active specialist forensic pathologists."

Crime prevention chief assistant Commissioner Frank Alton, who helps administer mortuaries nationally, confirmed the police were unable to cope with the service nationally, and were handing over responsibility to the cash-strapped Department of Health.

Health Department director general Olive Shisana said departmental officials were considering the matter, but no final decision had been reached.

A spokesman for the Public Works Department, which administers morgue buildings, said upgrading of the Salt River facility required massive new funding.

"That can only happen if they get additional funds for the next fiscal year," said Public Works Department regional manager Greg MacMaster.

Government health inspector Captain Peter Jacobs said the Salt River morgue was designed to deal with only a few hundred bodies a year. "These labs come from the pre-60s when nobody knew about AIDS. Now you get a lot more deaths, and mortuaries cannot handle the load."

Danie Klopper, the head of the Cape metropolitan council's scientific services, said liquid waste from the mortuary was supposed to end up in the sewerage works, where it was treated with other household and industrial waste.

He said an ongoing major "illegal" leak from the morgue or factory facility was unlikely as the discharge would be spotted by inspectors, who were always on the lookout for "discoloration".

Professor Deon Knobel, chief specialist for the Department of Health Department at the Salt River morgue, said medical staff handled up to 28 bodies daily.

"There are supposed to be six of us, but we are only three," he said.

(56) ST 8/3/98

ent and Housing Minister Hillary Armstrong, right, toured hannesburg, with the city's Eastern council mayor, Justice Armstrong was in SA under invitation from Constitutional Valli Moosa, who is due to release a white paper on local tion today. The UK about to embark on a similar process of formation.

Picture: Andy Katz

inces 'want produce levies'

vanted to intro- n farm produce ational agricul- il, council chair- id last week.

ir own arrange- ncluding veteri- ting of produce g council, a cen-

"The new mar- ws provinces ... to apply to the council for statutory measures like levies. However, such intervention cannot negate arrangements at national level," Kassier said.

Land and Agriculture Minister Derek Hanekom said he was aware of only the Western Cape wanting to bring back statutory levies.

Western Cape agriculture MEC Lampie Fick was unavailable for comment, but a media report said the province drafting legislation proposing that the department be privatised.

Chemical trade 'comes clean'

(66)

Josey Ballenger

BD 9/3/98

THE chemical industry and some allies have gone "green" in launching the first report on a voluntary initiative to improve companies' health, safety and environmental performance.

Since 1994, 120 SA companies have signed the international Responsible Care initiative, started in 1985 by the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association and now operating in 41 countries. The initiative is administered locally by the Chemical and Allied Industries' Association, which represents 90% of chemicals manufactured and used in SA.

The initiative's goals are to improve the health and safety of employees and the public, protect and rehabilitate the environment, introduce cleaner technologies and promote sustainable development.

Implementation of the initiative is assessed every two years, with the findings published in reports by the various member countries.

SA's inaugural report, launched on Friday in Johannesburg, was described as the industry's first self-assessment and will be used as a baseline to evaluate companies' performances.

Trade and Industry Minister Alec Erwin said the department would watch the initiative's implementation to make sure the industry was sufficiently self-regulating. He emphasised the need for "outside" auditors of companies' environmental performance and verifiable targets and said he could not see the initiative succeeding without labour's input.

Shirley Miller of the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union warned against the initiative becoming "another cosy relationship between half the industry and government" and said there was "alarming evidence" of workers not being involved in Responsible Care. She called for the involvement of community and environmental groups as well.

'Pooling of electrical power benefits southern Africa'

BD 9/3/98

Robyn Chalmers

SIGNIFICANT benefits have emanated from the formation of the Southern Africa Power Pool (Sapp), including reduced operating costs and improved working relations between members.

Francis Masawi, Sapp management committee chairman, s aid recently members had also prevented substantial load shedding and the subsequent loss of revenue.

He said there were enormous challenges ahead for governments and electricity utilities throughout southern Africa. By far the biggest of these was that most member countries had about 80% of their population without electricity.

"The reason for this is the cost of establishing the infrastructure to provide affordable power to the often scattered rural areas where most of the population lives," he said.

The rationale behind Sapp was the creation of an efficient energy market with the goal of maximising transfers across the interconnected system.

Members include Angola, Botswana, SA, Mozambique, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Masawi said investment in energy sources was the single biggest such programme in the region's history, entailing capital expenditure of between $15bn and $20bn over the next 10 years.

Funds for this expansion would come mainly from private sector investors as the independent power producers model took root in the region.

Nampower technical services senior GM Imker Hoogenhout said nothing could be planned or developed in Sapp or within SA Development Community (SADC) without taking cognisance of Eskom which produced about 90% of electricity in the region.

Hoogenhout said the SADC was still largely characterised by vertically integrated utility companies mostly operating under government influence.

Whether or not SADC was ready, the rest of the world was opening up the electricity supply sector to private initiative.

Sasol loses first round of environmental fight

ET (BR) 9/3/98 (56)

JONATHAN ROSENTHAL

Johannesburg — Round one in the ongoing legal battle between Save the Vaal Environment (Save), the non-profit environmentalist lobby, and Sasol, the petrochemicals from coal producer, went to the environmentalists.

Save obtained on Thursday a High Court order withdrawing Sasol's permit to strip-mine coal in the environmentally sensitive Rietspruit wetlands adjacent to the Vaal river.

The judgment could have far-reaching implications for the mining industry, as it found that interested and affected parties had a right to voice their objections before a mining permit could be issued by the department of minerals and energy.

The judgment could also have implications for Sasol's other mining operations in the area, which Save said operated under temporary mining permits.

Round two went to Sasol on Friday when it was granted leave to appeal the judgment. This in effect placed the judgment in suspense and allowed Sasol to continue with its plans until the appeal was heard, Alfonso Niemand, Sasol's communications manager, said last week.

At the heart of the dispute are Sasol's plans to establish the Sigma North West strip mine to replace its underground operations that provide coal to the Sasol Chemical Industries plant at Sasolburg.

Last year Save brought a court action against Sasol and the mineral and energy affairs department, arguing that Sasol had been granted permission to establish the strip mine before their objections had been heard.

The court found that granting authorisation to mine without hearing the concerns of affected parties ran counter to the values of an open and democratic society.

Sasol said in a statement on Friday that it would not have proceeded with the planned mine because it was still waiting for the approval of its environmental management programme from the department of minerals and energy.

"The possible consequences of this legal dispute have been taken into consideration in the commissioning plan for Sigma North West," Sasol said.

"Meanwhile, as a temporary bridging arrangement, Sasol Mining is purchasing coal from external sources to ensure a stable supply of coal for feedstock to the Sasol Chemical Industries plant in Sasolburg. The plant will therefore not be detrimentally affected."

Alert traffic officer averts hazardous-waste disaster

Star 10/3/98 (56)

Truck leaked purified sodium phosphate all along N1 highway

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Only the vigilant action of a traffic officer averted certain disaster when he discovered purified sodium phosphate leaking from a chemical transport truck that had stopped to overnight at the Kranskop toll plaza near Potgietersrus yesterday.

The N1 was sealed off and personnel at the toll gate evacuated from 8am until 11am as members of the Potgietersrus fire department and a chemical clean-up team from Johannesburg raced to the scene.

The incident is the second chemical spill on South Africa's roads over the past few days.

Jan le Roux, chief fire officer for the Greater Potgietersrus fire department, said the driver of the truck had not sealed off the chemicals properly, causing a leak from the back of the truck.

The chemicals were being transported from Polifin in Sasolburg to Phalaborwa.

"The traffic officer stopped to see why the truck had been pulled off the road and when he walked around the truck, he saw the chemicals leaking from the back. It seems as if the chemicals were leaking all the way from Sasolburg," Le Roux said.

According to the fire department, purified sodium phosphate is a corrosive waste product that contains 15% sulphuric acid. It causes burns and fluid buildup on the lungs if inhaled, and could prove fatal.

The truck was, however, allowed to continue its journey after the leaking outlet valve was resealed.

Time-bomb tankers on the roads

By Melanie-Ann Feris

Only a small number of drivers who carry millions of litres of hazardous chemicals are trained to deal with a spill, environmental organisations have warned.

Although legislation says drivers who transport hazardous material need to undergo training once a year, many companies do not comply with the law.

Environmental groups that are lobbying for better legislation to regulate the hazardous chemical industry, as well as registered chemical transport carriers, believe the problem is worsened by the shortage of officials to enforce the law.

Clive Wadsworth, senior operation manager for the Industrial Chemicals Company, said many operators were attracted to the lucrative chemical transport market, but very few trained their drivers or employed trained personnel.

"We are concerned about this, it is affecting the whole industry very negatively."

Over the past few months there have been a number of chemical spills. The northbound M1 freeway was closed between the Southgate and Xavier Road off-ramps on Saturday due to a 5km-long diesel spill.

A vehicle from Waste-Tech, an operational division of Enviroserv, was involved in a chemical spill on the N12 close to Boksburg on Wednesday. Seven drums of dichlorophenol fell off a truck when the driver swerved to avoid another vehicle.

On March 2, a truck transporting ammonium nitrate fertiliser overturned outside Sasolburg in the Free State, seriously injuring a child and his mother.

On January 30, hundreds of litres of sulphuric acid spilt from a tanker on the Old Pretoria Road in Midrand.

On January 28, 50 000 litres of diesel was spilt on the R103/R66 intersection in Gingindlovu in KwaZulu Natal when a bakkie drove into the back of the diesel tanker. It took five days to clear.

Authorities have warned that insufficient controls regulating the transportation of hazardous materials have made the country vulnerable to a major chemical disaster.

Ken Bromfield, managing director of Enviroserv Holdings, said all their drivers were trained to deal with any possible situation on the road, and while one person could do very little during an accident, their drivers could take precautions to secure the area and call for backup.

"There are extremely competent companies out there, but unfortunately you do find the inexperienced operator and they are the danger on the roads," Bromfield said.

The Safety and First Aid Management estimates that less than 20% of all drivers who transport hazardous materials have been trained to deal with a spill.

According to Mike van Wyk, an independent safety consultant for the company, transporting chemicals was "like driving around with a bomb". Very few people realised the harmful effects a spill could have – not only on the driver of a vehicle but also on the environment.

Keith Cooper, director of conservation for the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa, said they would prefer to see hazardous materials moved by rail.

Banned agrochemicals to be shipped to Ireland

(56) CT(BR) 11/3/98

ANN CROTTY

Johannesburg — The South African government has undertaken to finance the collection and shipment of 800 tons of obsolete and banned crop protection and animal healthcare products from southern Africa to incinerator facilities in Wales.

In announcing the initiative, the first of its kind in this country, the department of agriculture said it and the Crop Production and Animal Health Association would retrieve, package, transport and dispose of these products.

The department has allocated R8,80 million towards the project. Rechem, an international company specialising in the collection, shipment and disposal of obsolete agrochemical products, won the tender for the operation.

Of the estimated 800 tons needing to be shipped, about 500 tons belong to the department and have accumulated in various sheds around the country. The rest belongs to institutions and farmers; large quantities are also located in Swaziland and Namibia.

A spokesman for the department said "the products are not dangerous or particularly toxic but they do not break down ... they remain in the food chain".

Individual farmers and institutions are urged to participate in the national retrieval programme, which provides an opportunity to get rid of the products at no cost to themselves. The spokesman indicated that products manufactured prior to 1970 were likely to fall into the retrieval category.

He explained that the increasing concern is a reflection of the increasing knowledge available to scientists. "There are different ways of getting rid of these stocks such as reformulation but the only responsible way is through high temperature incinerators. There are no such facilities in the southern hemisphere which is why we are shipping the products to Wales."

Loads of sulphur stockpile for W Cape farmers

STAFF REPORTER ARG 12/3/98 (56)

The remains of a controversial sulphur stockpile at AE&CI's site in Somerset West will be removed by a fleet of trucks over the next six weeks.

The stockpile, which is contaminated with soil, belongs to the Department of Trade and Industry. It will be distributed among farmers for nothing.

Two people died and many were treated for breathing difficulties when the sulphur mound caught fire in December 1995 and a south-easter blew toxic fumes into Macassar.

Noel Williams, chairman of a parliamentary committee appointed to oversee the removal of the stockpile, said the material would be distributed among almost 200 farmers in the Swartland and Robertson-Worcester districts.

"The contaminated material has been blended into two piles, one of about 20% sulphur and the other of 60% strength," said Mr Williams.

"The bulk of the material is of 20% strength and will go to the Swartland to help counter soil deficiencies while the 60% material will be sent to fruit farmers in the Robertson-Worcester district."

Deliveries would be made by four 30-ton trucks from next week and would be completed by April 24.

held in court proceedings have run
their course, Captain Noth-
ntability to fill the
A panel

CAPE ARGUS, THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 1998

Lake of poison being lowered

'Chronic health risk' posed by black mussels

ARG 12/3/98 (56)

DI CAELERS
SPECIAL WRITER

The water level of a toxic lake at Noordhoek will be lowered immediately to stop more lethal poison seeping into the sea at Kommetjie after tests found black mussels to be dangerous.

Salt will be introduced to Wildevoëlvlei as well in an effort to kill the highly toxic blue-green algae, the source of the scare, which has taken over the lake.

The plan was confirmed by Ivan Bromfield, director of health services of the South Peninsula municipality, after an emergency meeting.

Bill Harding, head of hydrobiology of the Cape Metropolitan Council, said he had tested mussels from two Kommetjie beaches during the past two weeks and both batches contained toxins.

The latest results came in on Monday and Dr Harding is expecting more results next week from crayfish taken from the sea on Monday.

The crayfish feed on mussels and the tests will determine how far up the food chain the toxins have travelled.

"People shouldn't touch the mussels in the inter-tidal zone at Kommetjie.

"There are enough toxins to pose a chronic health risk," Dr Harding said.

Glenn Ashton, an executive committee member of the Noordhoek Environmental Action Group, said the vlei had been under increasing pressure during the past few years because the sewerage works, which pumped effluent into it, had been doubled in size. As a result, the vlei had changed from being a seasonal to a perennial vlei and extremely high nutrient levels were being recorded.

At the end of last year, the pond weed at the bottom of the lake died and the toxic blue-green algae took over.

"This algae has a horrible propensity to go toxic and about two months ago that is exactly what happened," said Mr Ashton.

The Kommetjie Environmental Action Group's Wally Petersen said the crisis proved that a coastal system should never be used as a filter for pollutants. "This is a classic example of system overload."

He said the sewerage system needed to be upgraded "to ensure maximum nutrient removal before anything enters the vlei", as did the stormwater system.

"Stormwater from half the Noordhoek valley is going into the vlei with no filtration or buffering and that is shocking in itself."

'No adequate provision for the environment'

(56)

CT 12/3/88

ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE environment has not been adequately provided for in the Budget and the money allocated to it has not even kept pace with inflation, UCT's head of Environmental Science, Professor Richard Fuggle, said yesterday.

"The growth rate in the environment budget is absolutely minimal, as it has been in the past. We're seeing a serious deterioration in environmental management, which is likely to continue if no serious attention is given to resources.

"There is a mismatch between government rhetoric and the resources needed to implement policies. The government says one thing, but doesn't provide the resources to carry out their policies."

The Environmental Affairs and Tourism vote increased from R400,7 million to R445,8m, of which R64,7m will be allocated to Satour to promote tourism.

He said it was interesting to see that the largest allocation, R118 000 milion, would go to environmental management. "It's pleasing to see this, and one hopes that a substantial amount of this will go into the management of the urban environment."

Chemical spill highlights need for waste legislation

Josey Ballenger (56) BD 13/3/98

ENVIROSERV Holdings' accidental chemical spill last week has highlighted the urgent need for improved, co-ordinated waste management and transport regulations, say industry, government and environmental sources.

EnviroServ MD Ken Bromfield said the company, SA's largest waste handler, "welcomed" impending legislation that regulated both the disposal and transport of hazardous waste.

Last week three drums of granulated dichlorophenol fell off an EnviroServ truck when the driver swerved to avoid an accident on the N12. The chemicals were quickly cleaned up. However, environmentalists saw the accident as another indication of the need for a speedy passage of relevant legislation.

The environmental affairs and tourism department said its draft white paper on integrated pollution and waste management was referred back to the department "for some issues on the institutional arrangements to be resolved". It envisaged the paper would be finalised by midyear.

The Star ... Friday March 13 1998

It stinks, say residents hit by sewage spills

(66)

Star 13/3/98

Homeowners inconvenienced and endangered by bacteria-laden waste spewed out of inadequate systems

By Melanie-Ann Fers
Environment Reporter

Bacterial, coliform and E.coli counts, which show the presence of human faeces and can cause cholera, have reached unacceptably high levels in the Braamfontein Spruit and are being exacerbated by another sewage spill.

Val Kleyn, chairwoman of the Braamfontein Spruit Trust, said yesterday bacterial counts in all the spruits were way beyond safety limits because of continuous sewage spills.

"This (sewage spills) is an ongoing thing, the problem is getting the information. Officials tend to deny that this is happening," she said.

On February 23, bacterial, coliform and faecal E.coli counts at the confluence of the Braamfontein and Sand spruits exceeded by far the maximum safety limits for potable water.

Residents in Parkhurst said yesterday that, in mid-January, raw sewage from a burst sewerage pipe flowed into the road, into stormwater drains and directly into the spruit.

Earlier this week, another broken sewerage pipe in the area also caused sewage to spill into the spruit.

Claudia Organ, a Parkhurst resident whose house overlooks the spruit, said: "My husband said that when it (the sewage) came down the street, there were condoms and all kinds of horrible things."

When The Star visited the spruit where it runs through the Parkhurst area yesterday, there was a strong smell of sewage from water spilling out of a stormwater drain.

According to Organ, sewage is constantly allowed to flow into the spruit through a stormwater pipe which runs through her property.

Residents fear construction being done to upgrade the sewerage system will aggravate the situation.

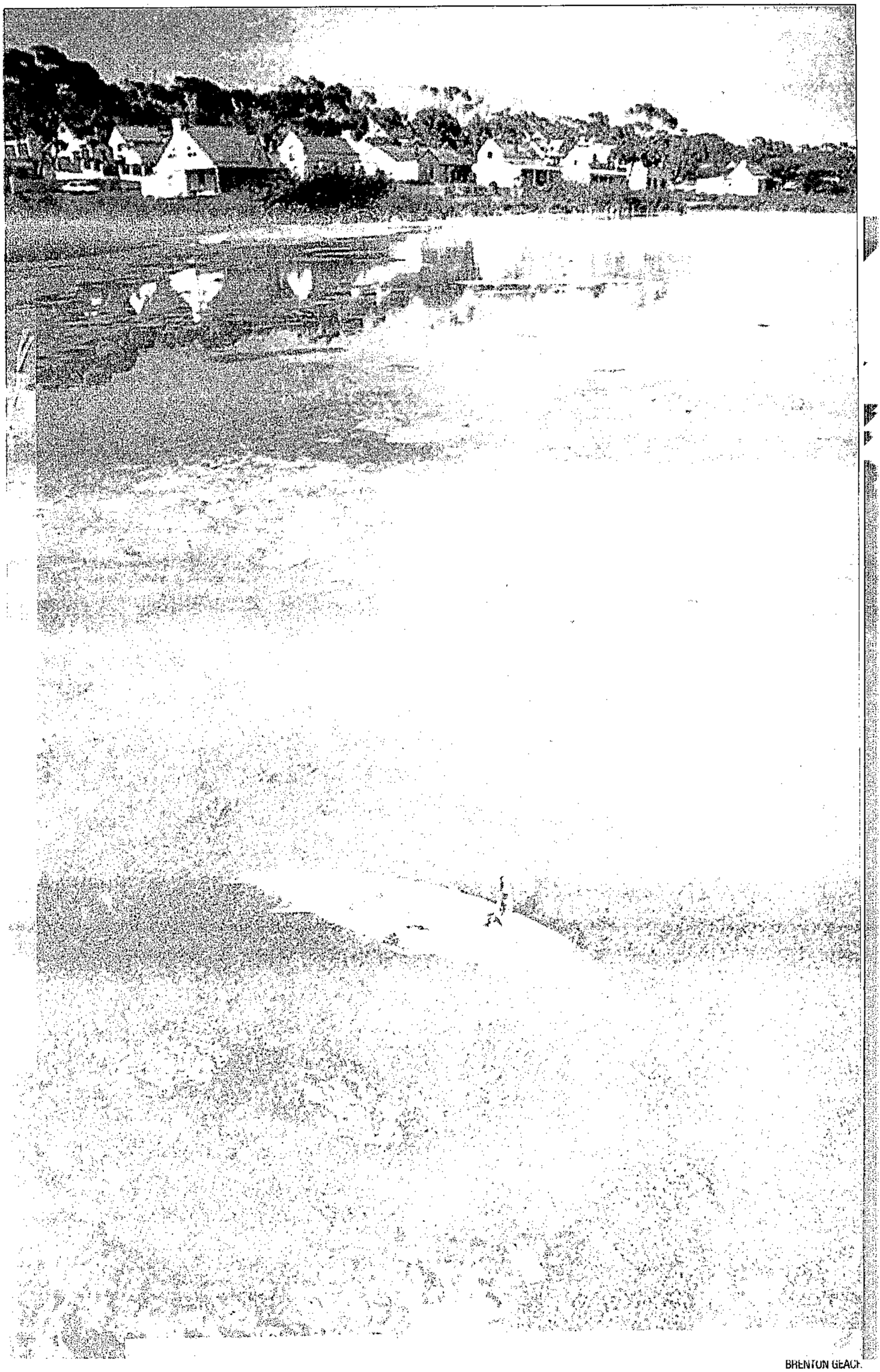
Eastern Council spokesman Keith Peacock said it was impossible to divert sewage away from the broken segment or blocked pipe, as this would result in sewage backing up into residents' homes.

"Where sewage finds its way via the stormwater drains into river courses, there is a follow-up clean-up exercise to minimise the environmental impact," he said.

'All kinds of horrible things' ran down street

Hugo van der Merwe, on-site clerk for Keeve Steyn Consultants, the construction company doing the upgrading work, has given the assurance that the sewage was being diverted into another pipe and then back into sewerage pipelines.

"It does occasionally happen that sewage leaks, but we put a stop to it immediately," he said.



BRENTON GEACH

How green was my alley: blue-green algae is threatening to destroy the wetlands system in the Noordhoek valley

Salt 'bombing' on cards to kill toxc algae in wetlands

Marine life at estuary declared health risk

ARG 14/3/98 (56)

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WARING

Environmental experts are considering a "shock treatment plan" to destroy toxic blue-green algae threatening the major wetlands systems of the Cape Peninsula.

Poisonous blue-green algae seeping into the sea from the Wildevoël estuary near Kommetjie has resulted in mussels and other marine life becoming highly toxic.

Julia Wood of the Environmental Management Branch said one of the proposals to rehabilitate threatened vleis was to reduce water levels and to drop 300 tons of salt by helicopter to kill the algae.

But she warned that the algae would initially release more toxins when it died. The mussels near the outflow on Kommetjie beach would then become more toxic than ever in the short-term.

Meanwhile tests are being run on mussels found in the deeper water and crayfish to try to establish the extent of poisoning.

Bill Harding of Scientific Services said swift action in putting up signs and warning local residents to stay clear of the water had helped prevent loss of human life or serious illness. He said the poison affected the liver.

Conservationists fear a chain reaction that could destroy other sensitive wetlands.

Glenn Ashton of the Friends of Wildevoëlvlei said it was not known what effect the algae would have on the lagoon and prawn beds behind Noordhoek beach – a popular bait collecting site.

He said the entire wetlands system was threatened by mismanagement and that the stormwater drains spilling into the vlei were a major bone of contention.

Saturday Argus was shown a stormwater drain from Ocean View that opened directly on to the land and into the vlei. Conservationists said that at times raw sewage had landed in the vlei.

Mr Ashton said public concern about doubling the capacity of the water treatment works next to the vlei had largely been ignored. A report on the shortcomings of the project drawn up by experts had also apparently been ignored.

Mr Ashton said he had predicted the collapse of the system 18 months ago, but that nothing had been done.

Now local authorities are faced with a major disaster that could result in the death of the wetlands.

Health hazard: Sea Fisheries officer Johan de Wit at the vlei outlet on Kommetjie beach

Oil plan for Table Bay

(56) ARG 14/3/98

Pollution threat to prime beaches feared

WILLEM STEENKAMP

Supertankers moored in Table Bay near Robben Island, offloading refined petrol into an underwater pipeline – this is the plan that has South Africa's oil industry in an uproar.

An "oil war" is set to erupt between the major oil companies and the Government if the R350-million scheme to import and sell refined fuel directly to emerging black-controlled companies goes ahead.

The big oil firms import crude oil, which is refined locally.

But if the project is approved, the government controlled Strategic Fuel Fund (SFF) will import refined petrol, jet fuel, diesel and other oil products and pipe it ashore in Table Bay to its old tank farm near Milnerton.

Refined oil products will be offloaded from supertankers connecting to a controversial new single-point mooring facility to be constructed in the sea between Robben Island and Bloubergstrand.

The refined fuel products will be pumped through a submerged pipeline, which will run along the ocean floor to a point north of Bloubergstrand, then south-east to the Milnerton tank farm near the Caltex refinery.

The fuel will be stored in 39 old tanks used some time ago to store strategic crude oil supplies for the previous government. These tanks may have to be upgraded at an estimated cost of R20-million.

If the plan meets approval, the fuel will be sold directly to emerging companies (owned and operated by previously disadvantaged South Africans) and delivered by road transport from the tank farm. This is set to lead to escalating competition between the major oil companies and SFF, and is expected to cause an outcry among environmentalists over the pollution threat to the Cape's prime beaches.

Pieter Coetzee, deputy chief director of operations at SFF, said the project would be funded through the sale of crude reserves. This means that taxpayers will indirectly fund the project. Refined products will be imported from North Sea and Mediterranean refineries.

Road tanker delivery will not be handled by the SFF, but by companies owned by previously disadvantaged groups.

At a recent public meeting, Bothasig and Milnerton residents expressed fears about a storage facility for refined fuel products in their neighbourhood. The area has become increasingly urbanised and a large number of road tankers in transit is viewed as unacceptable by many residents.

A spokesman for the Caltex refinery near Milnerton, which supplies the major oil companies, said the company supported black empowerment, but questioned the financial viability of the SFF scheme.

"The profit margins on fuel are very low, and taking into account the road transport delivery costs of such as scheme, it remains doubtful whether it will be financially viable.

"Also, such a scheme flies directly in the face of the Government's goal of job creation. Importing a refined product will not create jobs," said the spokesman.

Another industry source said the scheme seemed like a "last-gasp effort" by the SFF to ensure its continued existence.

But Mr Coetzee emphasised that downstream activities of the scheme, such as distribution and sales, would indeed create more jobs. He admitted that the scheme would also ensure SFF employees would "retain their jobs".

Riaz Jawoodeen, director of research on liquid fuels at the Institute for Policy and Social Research (a non-governmental organisation based in Cape Town), said the scheme was "ill-conceived and totally uneconomical".

Mr Jawoodeen said it made no economic sense to place a delivery point in Table Bay, while an existing pipeline in the harbour could be used to convey imported refined fuels to the tank farm depot.

> ***'The SFF is restructuring assets, but has no definite plan ... it is a stupid idea'***

Mr Jawoodeen said there were also large SFF storage depots at Saldanha that could be used for white fuels. These could then be piped from Saldanha to Cape Town via an existing pipeline between Saldanha and Milnerton.

"This is an ill conceived idea by the Strategic Fuel Fund which is busy restructuring state assets, but clearly has no definite plan on how to achieve this goal. Frankly, it is a stupid idea."

The placing of a single point delivery facility and a pipeline in the sea near Bloubergstrand is expected to lead to strong opposition from environmentalists.

In July 1995 the Apollo C sank off Dassen Island and bunker oil washed up on the Cape's beaches for months afterwards. The oil pollution had a major impact on tourism.

It cost more than R26-million in direct costs to clean up the beaches, while indirect losses suffered by the tourism industry ran into many millions more.

The SFF is proposing that a mooring facility able to handle oil tankers of up to 150 000 tons be placed in the sea either south or north of Robben Island. Marine experts have pointed out that Table Bay is generally known as a graveyard for ships. Over the years more than 300 vessels have sunk in Table Bay, while 47 ships have foundered off Robben Island alone.

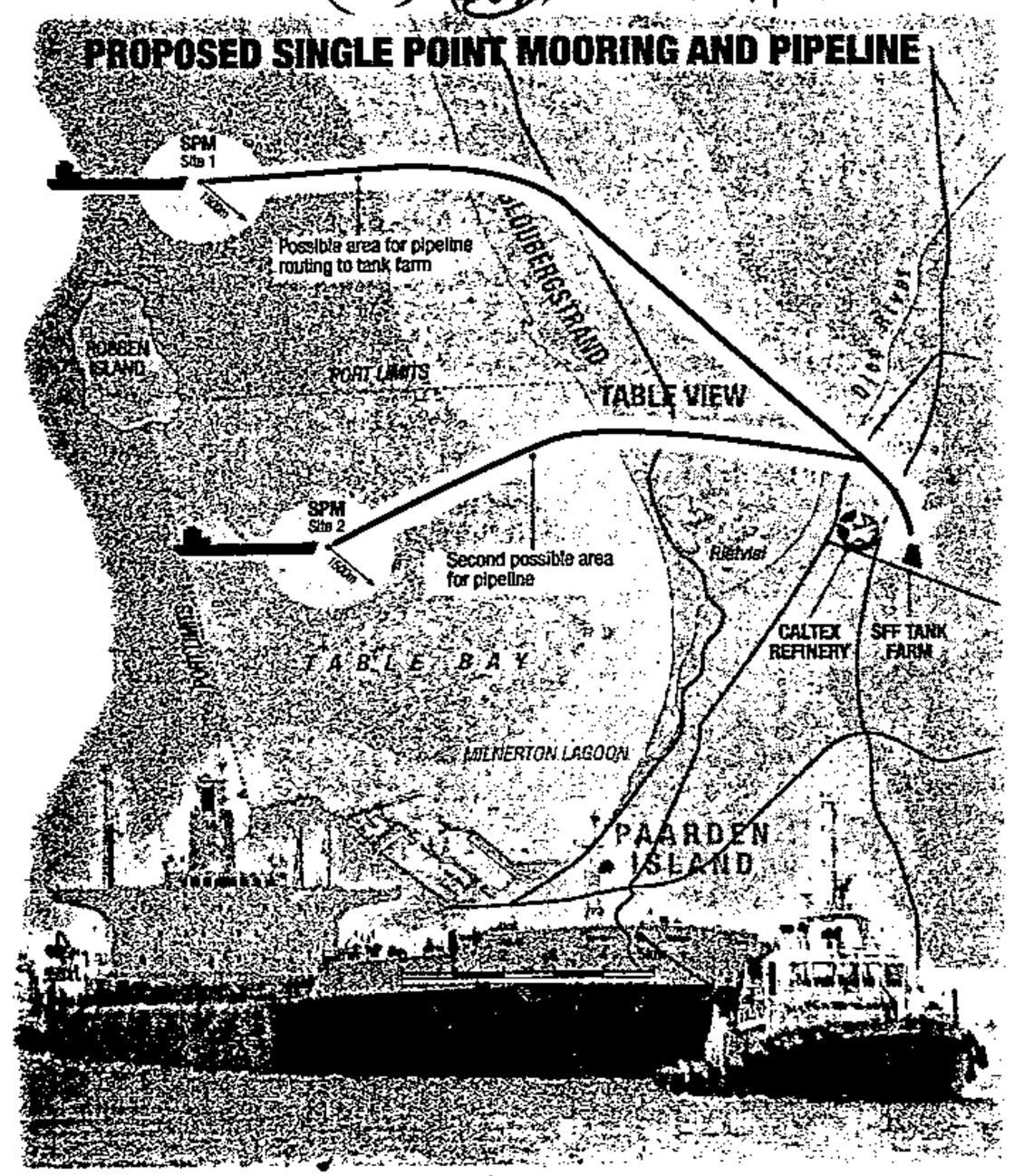
The SFF has commissioned an environmental impact assessment to determine the benefits and impact of the proposed project. The study is being undertaken by the CSIR and Crowther Campbell & Associates.

Anton Moldan, environmental advisor to the South African Petroleum Industry Association, warned that there was always a pollution risk when ships delivered oil products to a dedicated loading and offloading facility. He said such a risk would have to be weighed against the possible economic benefits of the scheme.

In a study on oil spills undertaken worldwide over a 15-year period, it was established that 77,8 % of all "minor" oil spills (less than seven tons) occurred at so-called single point mooring facilities.

But, said Mr Moldan, it was the possibility of a supertanker being wrecked on the Cape's beaches that was of greater concern. If one such tanker should founder in one of the Cape's notorious storms, the subsequent oil spill could rip the heart out of the Cape's most important industry – tourism.

Mr Moldan said an informed decision could only be made once the environmental impact assessment had determined the full impact and associated risks of the proposed project.



Pipe plan: these are the proposed two sites for an oil delivery pipe to the Milnerton tank farm which will allow 150 000 ton oil tankers to pipe refined fuel to the plant. Site 1 is the preferred position for the proposed single point mooring and pipeline

Waste disposal enters space age

BD 16/3/98 (56)

Josey Ballenger

SA's waste industry will enter the space age if its use of a technology that converts toxic wastes to harmless byproducts, designed by US space agency Nasa, is approved.

Waste management company Waste-Tech said at the weekend it was conducting an environmental impact assessment of a waste conversion process developed by Nasa which uses temperatures hotter than the sun's surface to reduce toxic waste products into harmless entities.

The company is proposing a R12m "plasma arch" torch and reaction chamber be located at the Holfontein hazardous waste site in Springs, Gauteng.

It would be used to destroy chlorinated toxic wastes such as PCBs and pesticides, which are encapsulated in reinforced concrete cells.

The process is more expensive than encapsulation, but may give hazardous waste generators peace of mind.

"Those clients who pay the extra money would have the satisfaction of knowing the material is converted into harmless byproducts and no longer exists as a waste material," said Waste-Tech consultant Brian Gibson, who was conducting the environmental impact assessment.

Nasa developed plasma arch technology more than 30 years ago to test the efficiency of spacecrafts' heat shields on their re-entry to earth's atmosphere, but it has recently been adapted for commercial use.

Waste-tech, a division of EnviroServ Holdings, would be the first to use the technology commercially in SA, although the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Mintek and the Atomic Energy Corporation had examined it, Gibson said.

Gibson noted that the process was "not incineration", as no combustion or burning took place.

Following exposure to intense heat, under which materials break down into their basic molecular components, a controlled cooling process reformed the molecules into byproducts that are relatively harmless and reusable.

The resultant product would be disposed of at Holfontein.

Gibson said in the next three to six months he would review relevant information, effects and alternatives in a report which would first be circulated to interested and affected parties for comment before being submitted to provincial environmental authorities.

He said the company hoped to have the assessment completed, and the technology working, in a year.

(56)

Two women fight to save the Fish Hoek dunes

CT 16/3/98

A DEVELOPER ignored the conditions of his permit and applied to build in a nature area. The authorities couldn't find the permit and gave him the go-ahead. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

MS Sandy Barnes of Fish Hoek was convinced that a permit had been signed 11 years ago when John Wiley was minister of environment, but she couldn't find it.

As developers geared up to build 300 houses in a nature area on the Fish Hoek dunes, Sandy and fellow environmental activist Ms Kim Kruyshaar began their long search for the "missing" permit.

They believed it would show that Wiley had already made a compromise with the owner way back in 1987, and that this meant no more development could take place on the slopes of Peers Hill, now known as Zone C.

But whenever Barnes and Kruyshaar turned to the authorities in an attempt to unearth the "Wiley" permit, they drew a blank. Some even told them it didn't exist.

Their story is one of the dogged determination of two women who cared enough about the environment to keep soldiering on for years, doing the job the authorities should have done.

The Fish Hoek dunes saga started 12 years ago when a developer applied to build a housing estate on the land, which fell inside the Cape Peninsula Nature Area.

There was a huge public outcry, and the matter was referred to then-minister of environment Wiley for approval. He turned it down.

It's not hard to see why. The land is part of the Silvermine River Valley, home to the only river in the Peninsula that has survived modern development and flows through a nature area from source to sea.

But Wiley made a compromise. As the proposed Fish Hoek by-pass road was planned to run through the southern end of the property, he allowed houses to be built on the piece of land to the south of the future road, but only on condition that the rest of the land to the north remained undeveloped.

A permit was issued to this effect and the developer, Fish Hoek Land Estates Co, built houses on Peers Hill's lower slopes.

There the matter should have rested. But through bungling and inefficiency by the authorities, the saga continued.

In 1991 the developer, ignoring his permit conditions, applied to the Fish Hoek Council to rezone Zone C so he could build houses on the higher slopes.

"The Fish Hoek municipality possibly didn't know about the Wiley permit preventing further development on that property, and the developer didn't disclose it," said Barnes.

Fish Hoek Council could not approve the rezoning anyway, because the guide plan said the land was a nature area. So the developer applied to Mr Lample Fick, then-deputy minister for regional affairs, to change the guide plan, which he did.

By then several environmental organisations had united under the banner of the Silvermine Valley Coalition to fight the Zone C development, with Barnes and Kruyshaar at the helm.

Said Barnes: "We were amazed, and challenged Fick's amendment. We said: 'You can't just change the guide plan to allow urban development. There's already been a compromise on this property'.

"But Fick told us no legal decision had been made, it was only an opinion of Wiley's that there should be no development. He said he had told his department to look for such a permit and they could not find one.

"He wrote that if the permit had been found, it would have been sufficient grounds for him to reconsider his decision."

By now Sandy began to believe the developer must be within his rights.

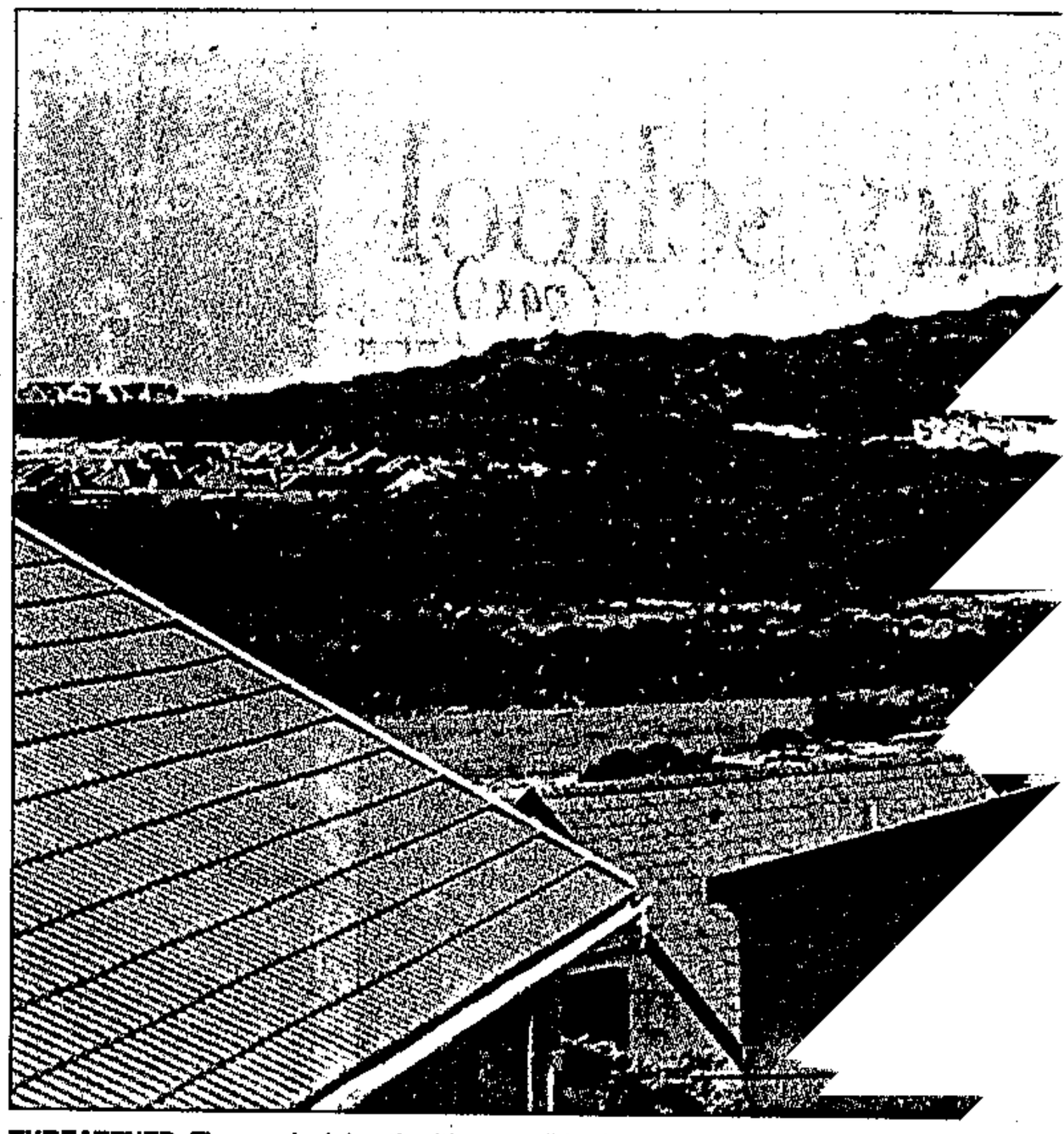
"What I didn't realise was that Fick's officials just hadn't looked properly.

"Perhaps they didn't want to find it."

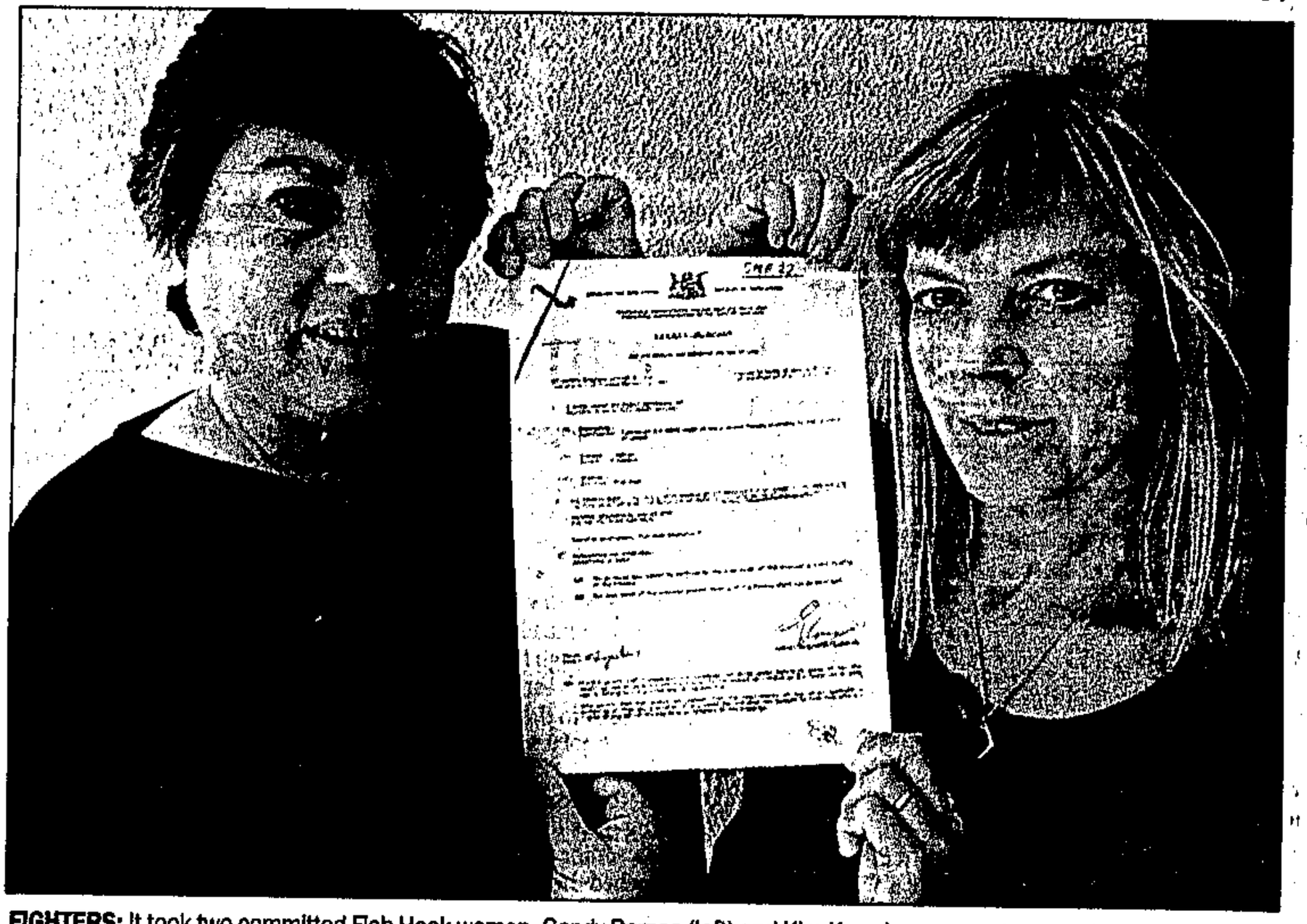
In 1994 the premier of the Western Cape rezoned Zone C, saying that Wiley's decision to turn down the housing development had been an "in principle decision", not legally binding. The premier, too, did not seem able to find the missing permit.

"We believed the premier's rezoning was invalid, and the coalition started court proceedings against him and the developer," Sandy said.

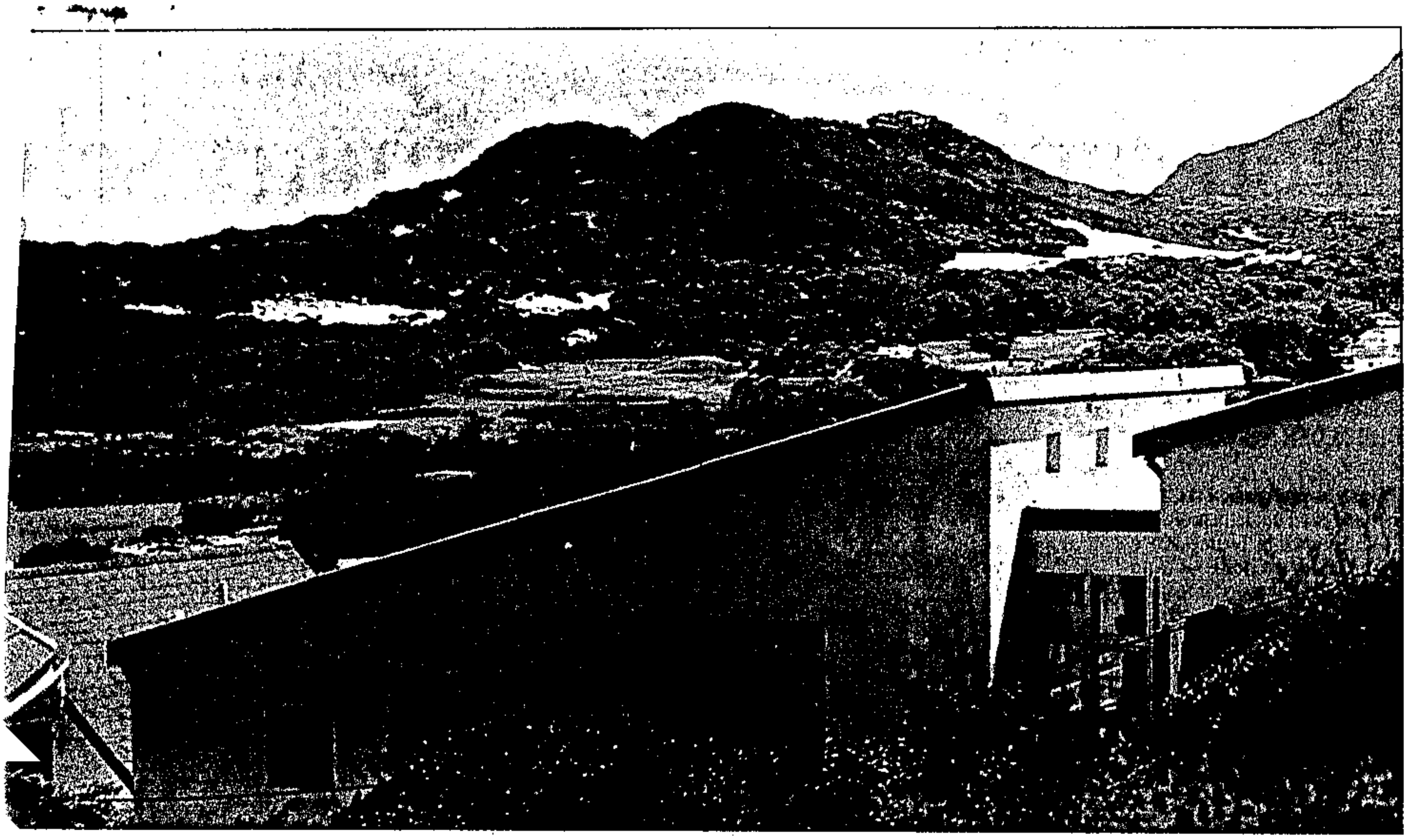
Two advocates, who felt strongly



THREATENED: The provincial authorities are dithering about whether to overturn the decis' rights.



FIGHTERS: It took two committed Fish Hoek women, Sandy Barnes (left) and Kim Kruyshaar, years to unearth a copy of a permit prohibiting development on Peers Hill. The authorities had told them the permit did not exist.



:hering about whether to overturn the decision to allow 300 houses to be built in a nature area on Peers Hill in Fish Hoek, although the landowner has no development

PICTURES: THEMBINKOSI DWAYISA

'n 1994 the premier of the Western ›e rezoned Zone C, saying that ›y's decision to turn down the hous- development had been an "in princi- decision", not legally binding. The nier, too, did not seem able to find nissing permit.

'We believed the premier's rezoning invalid, and the coalition started .t proceedings against him and the eloper," Sandy said.

.'wo advocates, who felt strongly about the issue, gave their time free to work on the case.

Meanwhile Sandy became more determined to track down the Wiley permit.

"The more I read up on the documentation, the more I came across references to it. I knew it must exist.

"I found reference in the files of the old MAC (Management Advisory Committee of the Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Area) to the Wiley permit in 1992.

"Our attorney asked province and the developer for a copy of the permit, but neither complied."

Then she had a brainwave. She contacted the former chairperson of the now disbanded MAC and asked him where the permit could be. He said it should be with Cape Nature Conservation.

"I went to their offices, and there we found a copy of the permit, in a beautifully documented file. It had been there since it was issued in 1987, yet no one had managed to find it.

"I was so excited. It was like finding the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," said Barnes.

The permit clearly stated: "The area north of the proposed present routing of the freeway shall not be developed."

After finding the permit, Barnes and Kruyshaar went to see the then-MEC for environment, Mr Kobus Meiring, and the then-MEC for planning, Fick.

"We thought Fick would realise he had made a mistake about amending the guide plan and set it aside. But instead he said the developer had said the permit might not be valid. We expected province to say 'Oops, we made a mistake', but they sided with the developer.

"Fick also asked us not to go public about finding the Wiley permit, so that he could have time to investigate it. We agreed."

That was in October last year. Recently they heard that Meiring had asked the National Park Committee to advise him on Zone C. Barnes and Kruyshaar became angry and decided to go public about the permit.

Said Kruyshaar: "If the authorities had got off their backsides, they would have found the permit themselves and all these hassles could have been avoided years ago."

It is now up to the new MEC for Environment, Mr Gerald Morkel, to take a final decision on Zone C.

Morkel's spokesperson said he was "waiting for full details" before taking action.

Said Barnes: "What they don't realise is that they don't have to take action. Wiley made the decision 11 years ago that a portion of the land could be developed on condition that the rest be left undeveloped, and that decision is still legally valid. The owner has no development rights.

"Now that we've found the permit, all province has to do is to say: 'Sorry, there's already been a compromise to develop some of the nature area, you've done that, so the rest stays undeveloped as the permit states.' That's it."

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BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

"I want to be strong like daddy

only if the perpetrator is gone," she said.

HUNT FOR 'MISSING' PERMIT (56)

Two women fight to save the Fish Hoek dunes

CT 16/3/98

A DEVELOPER ignored the conditions of his permit and applied to build in a nature area. The authorities couldn't find the permit and gave him the go-ahead. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

MS Sandy Barnes of Fish Hoek was convinced that a permit had been signed 11 years ago when John Wiley was minister of environment, but she couldn't find it.

As developers geared up to build 300 houses in a nature area on the Fish Hoek dunes, Sandy and fellow environmental activist Ms Kim Kruyshaar began their long search for the "missing" permit.

They believed it would show that Wiley had already made a compromise with the owner way back in 1987, and that this meant no more development could take place on the slopes of Peers Hill, now known as Zone C.

But whenever Barnes and Kruyshaar turned to the authorities in an attempt to unearth the "Wiley" permit, they drew a blank. Some even told them it didn't exist.

Their story is one of the dogged determination of two women who cared enough about the environment to keep soldiering on for years, doing the job the authorities should have done.

The Fish Hoek dunes saga started 12 years ago when a developer applied to build a housing estate on the land, which fell inside the Cape Peninsula Nature Area.

There was a huge public outcry, and the matter was referred to then-minister of environment Wiley for approval. He turned it down.

It's not hard to see why. The land is part of the Silvermine River Valley, home to the only river in the Peninsula that has survived modern development and flows through a nature area from source to sea.

But Wiley made a compromise. As the proposed Fish Hoek by-pass road was planned to run through the southern end of the property, he allowed houses to be built on the piece of land to the south of the future road, but only on condition that the rest of the land to the north remained undeveloped.

A permit was issued to this effect and the developer, Fish Hoek Land Estates Co, built houses on Peers Hill's lower slopes.

There the matter should have rested. But through bungling and inefficiency by the authorities, the saga continued.

In 1991 the developer, ignoring his permit conditions, applied to the Fish Hoek Council to rezone Zone C so he could build houses on the higher slopes.

"The Fish Hoek municipality possibly didn't know about the Wiley permit preventing further development on that property, and the developer didn't disclose it," said Barnes.

Fish Hoek Council could not approve the rezoning anyway, because the guide plan said the land was a nature area. So the developer applied to Mr Lampie Fick, then-deputy minister for regional affairs, to change the guide plan, which he did.

By then several environmental organisations had united under the banner of the Silvermine Valley Coalition to fight the Zone C development, with Barnes and Kruyshaar at the helm.

Said Barnes: "We were amazed, and challenged Fick's amendment. We said: 'You can't just change the guide plan to allow urban development. There's already been a compromise on this property'.

"But Fick told us no legal decision had been made, it was only an opinion of Wiley's that there should be no development. He said he had told his department to look for such a permit and they could not find one.

"He wrote that if the permit had been found, it would have been sufficient grounds for him to reconsider his decision."

By now Sandy began to believe the developer must be within his rights.

"What I didn't realise was that Fick's officials just hadn't looked properly.

"Perhaps they didn't want to find it."

In 1994 the premier of the Western Cape rezoned Zone C, saying that Wiley's decision to turn down the housing development had been an "in principle decision", not legally binding. The premier, too, did not seem able to find the missing permit.

"We believed the premier's rezoning was invalid, and the coalition started court proceedings against him and the developer," Sandy said.

Two advocates, who felt strongly about the issue, work on the case.

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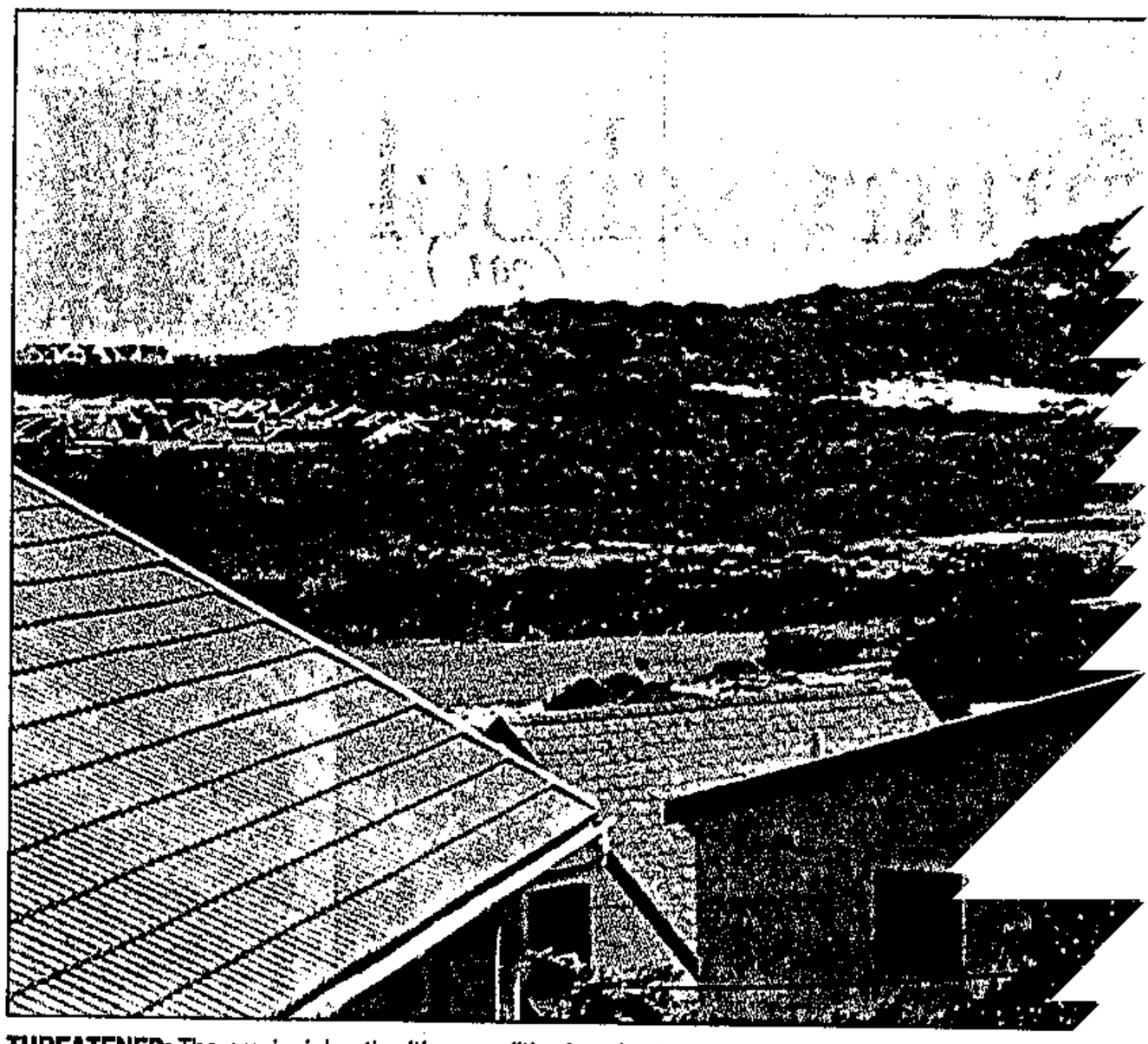
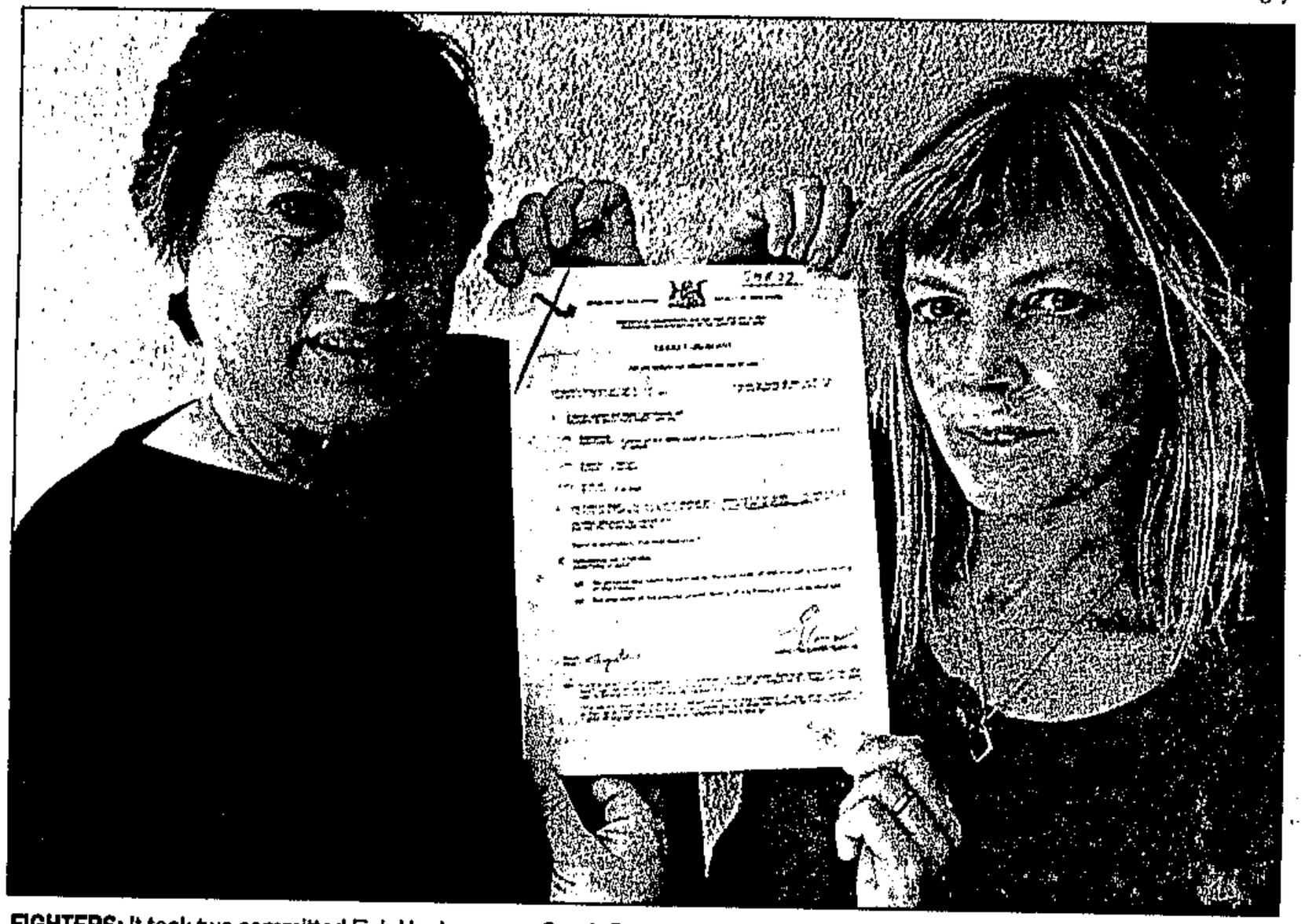
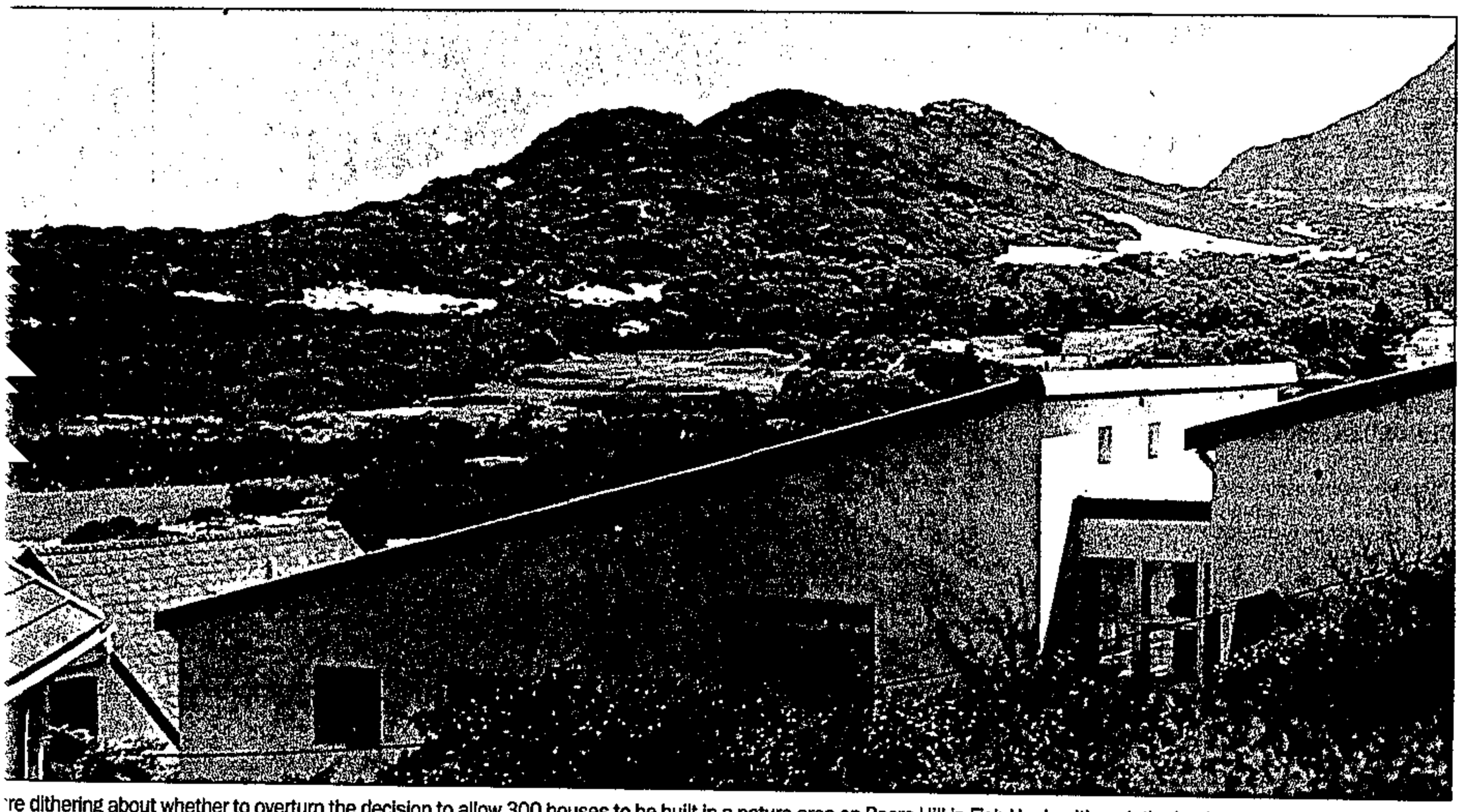


THREATENED: The provincial authorities are dithering about whether to overturn the decision to allow 3 rights.



FIGHTERS: It took two committed Fish Hoek women, Sandy Barnes (left) and Kim Kruyshaar, years to unearth a copy of a permit prohibiting development on Peers Hill. The authorities had told them the permit did not exist.



're dithering about whether to overturn the decision to allow 300 houses to be built in a nature area on Peers Hill in Fish Hoek, although the landowner has no development

PICTURES: THEMBINKOSI DWAYISA

In 1994 the premier of the Western Cape rezoned Zone C, saying that Wiley's decision to turn down the housing development had been an "in principle decision", not legally binding. The premier, too, did not seem able to find the missing permit.

"We believed the premier's rezoning was invalid, and the coalition started court proceedings against him and the developer," Sandy said.

Two advocates, who felt strongly about the issue, gave their time free to work on the case.

Meanwhile Sandy became more determined to track down the Wiley permit.

"The more I read up on the documentation, the more I came across references to it. I knew it must exist.

"I found reference in the files of the old MAC (Management Advisory Committee of the Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Area) to the Wiley permit in 1992.

"Our attorney asked province and the developer for a copy of the permit, but neither complied."

Then she had a brainwave. She contacted the former chairperson of the now disbanded MAC and asked him where the permit could be. He said it should be with Cape Nature Conservation.

"I went to their offices, and there we found a copy of the permit, in a beautifully documented file. It had been there since it was issued in 1987, yet no one had managed to find it.

"I was so excited. It was like finding the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," said Barnes.

The permit clearly stated: "The area north of the proposed present routing of the freeway shall not be developed."

After finding the permit, Barnes and Kruyshaar went to see the then-MEC for environment, Mr Kobus Meiring, and the then-MEC for planning, Fick.

"We thought Fick would realise he had made a mistake about amending the guide plan and set it aside. But instead he said the developer had said the permit might not be valid. We expected province to say 'Oops, we made a mistake', but they sided with the developer.

"Fick also asked us not to go public about finding the Wiley permit, so that he could have time to investigate it. We agreed."

That was in October last year. Recently they heard that Meiring had asked the National Park Committee to advise him on Zone C. Barnes and Kruyshaar became angry and decided to go public about the permit.

Said Kruyshaar: "If the authorities had got off their backsides, they would have found the permit themselves and all these hassles could have been avoided years ago."

It is now up to the new MEC for Environment, Mr Gerald Morkel, to take a final decision on Zone C.

Morkel's spokesperson said he was "waiting for full details" before taking action.

Said Barnes: "What they don't realise is that they don't have to take action. Wiley made the decision 11 years ago that a portion of the land could be developed on condition that the rest be left undeveloped, and that decision is still legally valid. The owner has no development rights.

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BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Mine dumps 'pose health risk' to Kagiso

(56)

Sowetan 16/3/98

By Noxolo Nxusani

THE Krugersdorp local council has called on the Government to help hundreds of residents in Kagiso and Randfontein whose health is at risk because of dust from mine dumps in the vicinity.

Residents have complained of continued ill-health and breathing difficulties when the wind blows dust from the mine dump to their homes.

One woman, Mrs Francina Nkathlo of the Father Gerald Mutton section in Kagiso, claims that the dust from the mine dumps has caused members of her family to be afflicted with severe skin problems, lung diseases and possibly even cancer.

Similar complaints were made by the Moiloa family, also of Kagiso.

Mr Uhuru Moiloa moved into the area in 1986 with his wife and three daughters.

"I have had to take my family to a doctor at least four times a month ever since we moved in, mainly because of eye irritation, breathing problems and itchy, inflamed skin," said Moiloa.

He said another doctor who used to live in Kagiso predicted that over the next 20 years nearly all children living in the area would suffer from some form of lung disease or respiratory problem.

Moiloa said he had tried in vain to communicate with mine authorities to discuss ways of preventing the dust from polluting the area.

After repeated appeals by residents, the Krugersdorp Town Council has stepped in and has called on the Ministry of Mineral and Energy Affairs as well as the Ministry of Environmental Affairs to investigate.

Dust pollution

However, Mr Mike Miller, assistant head of the council's health and cleansing department, said neither department had responded positively to the council's requests.

"They only promised to organise a meeting but did not specify when that would be," he said.

Miller added that the dust pollution, which is at its worst in June, July and August, sometimes gets so bad that it creates a haze over the entire township.

Ecotourism plan to lift ailing economies

ARG 17/3/98 (56)

Mbabane – South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland have embarked on a joint ecotourism corridor project that will open up 350 kilometres of coastline and nearly 300 000 hectares of game reserves in southern Africa.

A tourist route linking Durban to the Mozambican capital Maputo has already taken off, with construction work having started last year.

Accompanied by a road project through the landlocked kingdom of Swaziland, the initiative goes hand-in-hand with the Maputo corridor, a mammoth transport venture that will link Johannesburg to the Mozambican capital, according to plans presented here yesterday at an interministerial press conference.

The ministers of tourism, commerce and transport from all three countries have collaborated on this crossborder tourist zone for 16 months.

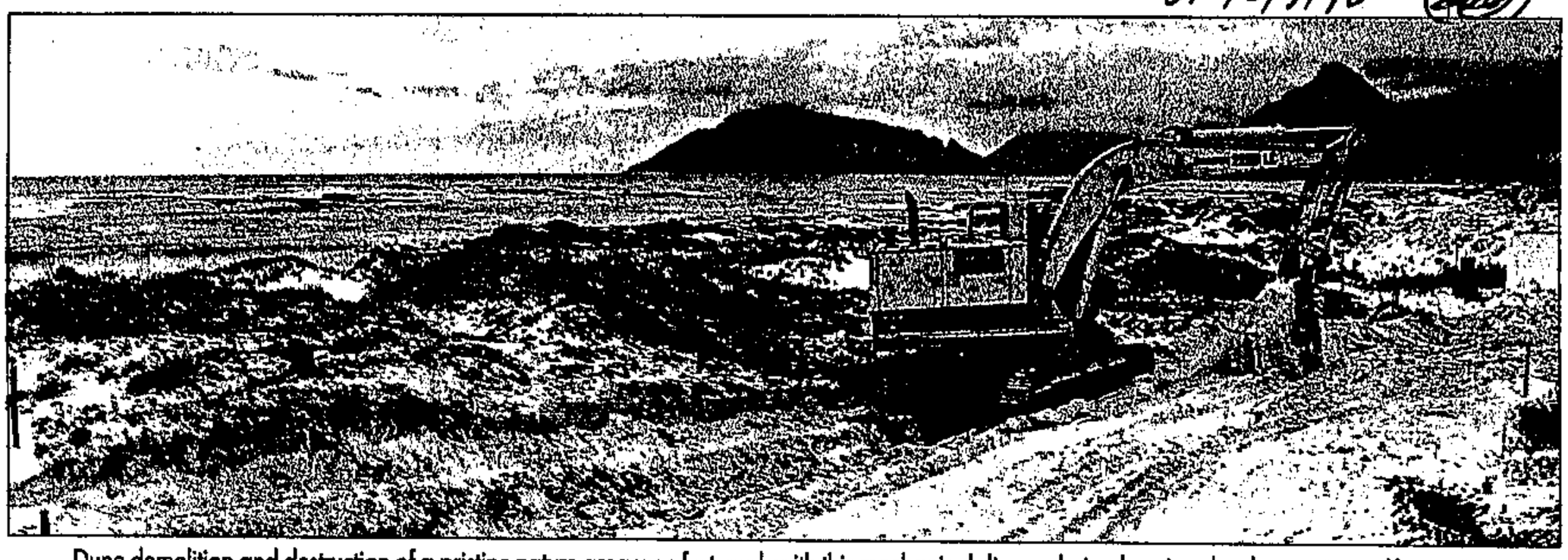
The zone is called Lebombo, after the massive mountains that overlap the countries' borders.

Albert Shabanga, Swaziland's minister of economic planning and development, said: "We want to alleviate poverty with environment-orientated projects."

The three countries, saddled with the effects of underdevelopment after a long civil war in Mozambique and decades of apartheid rule in South Africa, are looking to attract private capital into the region at a July conference for investors. – Sapa-AFP

Paving the SA tourism paradise

CT 18/3/98 (56)



Dune demolition and destruction of a pristine nature area was fast work with this mechanical digger during housing development near Kommetjie.

TONY WEAVER

argues that this year's budget allocation for Environmental Affairs and Tourism of R400,7-million, rising to R445,8-million for 2000, is a criminally short-sighted piece of economic planning.

SEVEN years ago, I went for long walks along the Klein Slangkop peninsula outside Kommetjie. Duikers peered from the bushes, baboons played on the seashore; there was a fish eagle which snatched fish from Wildevoëlvlei and Cape clawless otters basked on the banks.

Now the vlei is dead and so are the birds, the fish and the otters. Deadly blue-green algae, a direct result of pollution, invaded the vlei. The bush has been bulldozed into a housing development with security gates barring access.

The third phase is now on sale, another piece of urban sprawl in a once pristine rural space. Seven years ago, I dreamt of walking there with my child. Now my son is nearly three and he will never know the paradise I knew.

He is lucky. I have the resources to take him into the African bush, to wild places unspoilt by greed and the developers, where he can find his soul and his continent. But the children of Ocean View have lost that piece of wild land for ever. Now it is just an extension of an extension within a suburb.

Who gave permission for the landowner to destroy the peninsula? Why was no proper environmental impact assessment done? Why don't we have a coherent national environmental strategy in place to prevent such a rape of the land? Is there no limit to the greed of property developers?

The central government will argue that Kommetjie has nothing to do with it. It's the responsibility of the South Peninsula municipality, or the Western Cape government, or the Cape Metropolitan Council. And that's part of the disaster facing the environment in South Africa. Nine provinces, nine budgets and within each province scores of institutions of local government responsible for planning and development permits.

The Department of Environmental Affairs has neither the money nor the jurisdiction to interfere. Or, it seems, the will.

Leave direct environmental concerns aside and turn to the tourism side of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and you find an equally disturbing scenario.

Tourism is South Africa's fastest growing industry. It is the world's largest industry, outranking even the sale of arms and ammunition. Worldwide, it contributes an average of 10,9% of gross domestic product and, according to a year-old American Express report, produces annual revenues of $2,5-trillion (R12,5-trillion).

> Our children will inherit a planet laid waste by the greed of their parents. Our epitaph (to quote US singer Joni Mitchell) will be that we paved paradise and put up a parking lot.

Liz Westby-Nunn, chairperson of South Africa's tourism marketing organisation Satour, says that with the country now receiving more than 1,2-million tourists a year, the industry accounted for 4,6% of GDP.

That's a staggering R12,5-billion. With proper marketing, this could rise to 2,2-million tourists by 2000, lifting the GDP share to 8%, or R23-billion. More importantly, this will provide 800 000 direct jobs.

Given these figures, it is beyond comprehension that only R64,7-million has been allocated to Satour in this year's budget. Compounding Satour's woes is the recent withdrawal from the National Grading and Classification Scheme of almost all the major hotel groups, a loss in levies of R22-million. Whatever the justification given by the hotel groups (they say they are being discriminated against because B&Bs and other establishments are not levied), the withdrawal smacks of plain, simple greed.

Tourism and the environment are an inseparable entity in South Africa and their paltry budget is scandalous. Those 1,2-million tourists don't all come to do business or visit their long-lost Auntie Sophie. And very few come because we are such a trendy new democracy and rainbow nation.

They come because South Africa is the world's premier wildlife and nature tourism destination, the beaches are sexy and the beer is cheap.

Wilderness sells. Nature tourism, properly managed, is a high-earning, low-impact industry. It has the potential to be a giant industry for Africa, an industry which doesn't need filthy smoke stacks and chemical effluent and whose raw materials, properly managed, are inexhaustible.

A recent World Bank study of Mozambique and South Africa found that tourism and safari hunting provide 10 times as many jobs as cattle ranching.

The Kruger National Park grosses R90-million a year and employs 3 000 people at an annual wage bill of R50-million. But the ripple effects of tourism on surrounding communities has created another 13 000 jobs and contributes R429-million to South Africa's GDP.

And tourism to Africa is in its infancy: in 1995 tourists spent an estimated R276-billion in Africa. In the same year, they spent R100-billion in Britain, a place you could hide away in Africa's pocket and never find again.

And herein lies the future of South Africa and the sub-continent. Not in desperate attempts to become equal players on the world trade stage, but in utilising the two resources we have that are unique in the world: our people and their cultures, and our wilderness areas.

But our leaders need an urgent, strident wake-up call. Allocating just over R400-million to the environment budget is pissing in the face of a summer South-Easter.

Dr John Hanks, chief executive of the South African branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature, said in a 1997 interview: "Unless the government responds to the urgency of environmental issues, South Africa will be bankrupted as a nation. Leaders in government, business, and civic communities must recognise that there is more to the environment than game reserves."

"It has to do with quality of life, preservation of water catchments, health and economic sustainability. A bankrupt environment means a bankrupt country. South Africa urgently needs people in leadership to put a massive injection of funds and commitment into environmental issues across the board."

So, what do we have? Nine provincial departments of the environment, one national one, a myriad local government organs which are constantly being outwitted and flatfooted by the developers and the industrialists.

We end up with the White Houses and the Simolas, toxic waste nightmares, bleak housing developments that are doomed to failure because no consideration is given to environmental spatial planning, breeding grounds for gang warfare and drug deals.

We have a Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism that is reduced to running around putting out bush fires, because they don't have the resources to build firebreaks in the first place.

We have a fragmented national environmental policy hamstrung by a pathetic budget and incompetent, understaffed and under-funded provincial ministries which, with the exception of North West, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces, are regularly undermined by their political bosses.

The Western Cape is an example of a province where, despite the "voluntary" retrenchment of about 200 middle to senior conservationists, good decisions are thwarted by the politicians — will Lampie Fick ever live down the White House debacle? Did he do his homework? Was he subject to undue influence from his old cronies? Is the Pope Catholic?

Time is running out. Joni Mitchell wrote an anthem for the environment way back when I was still running around in bell-bottomed Wranglers pretending to be a hippie:

"Don't it always seem to go," she wrote, "that you don't know what you've got till it's gone — they paved paradise, and they put up a parking lot."

Most of the world has woken to the parking lot facing Planet Earth. It is time for our leaders, other than the indefatigable and immensely green and admirable Kader Asmal, to also wake up and smell the coffee.

Distinguished American environmental writer Eugene Linden, author of the forthcoming book *The Future in Plain Sight*, wrote in a recent Time magazine essay:

"Our grandchildren ... will inherit a planet with less than 20% of its original forests intact, with most of the readily available freshwater already spoken for, with most of the wetlands and reef systems destroyed or degraded and much of the arable land under plough. They will inherit a stressed atmosphere and an unwanted legacy of toxic waste in the soil and water ...

"Can the wizards of materialism, as a final piece of alchemy, halt environmental degradation and begin to repair the injuries inflicted on nature? Can a system demonstrably unsustainable in this century evolve into a successor more in harmony with the planet? Or ... will the inexorable expansion of the consumer society ultimately bring about a cataclysm that defines life in the coming decades?

"These questions cannot be ignored."

Indeed, these questions cannot be ignored. Because if we ignore them, and if our political masters continue to ignore them, our children will inherit a planet laid waste by the greed of their parents. Our epitaph will be that we paved paradise and put up a parking lot.

And it was cheap at the price. Just R400 700 000.

●

Tony Weaver is a Cape Town-based freelance journalist

Poachers terrorise Cape village

Gangs who are stripping coast near Hermanus of perlemoen put police to flight

Star 18/3/98 (56) FISHING

OWN CORRESPONDENT
Cape Town

Hawston is a picturesque little fishing community nestling against the holiday town of Hermanus. Policemen, however, fear this beautiful village.

For Hawston is the haven of perlemoen and crayfish poachers, gangsters so brazen that in broad daylight they gather in large groups and beat up policemen in Hermanus' main street.

Which is precisely what happened in Hermanus on Sunday afternoon.

Two policemen acting on a tip cornered a Toyota Camry, but the occupants refused to open the car's boot until they had called their attorney – but instead of legal counsel, 30 men arrived on the scene and assaulted Sergeant Douglas Kalis.

He and his colleague were forced to beat a hasty retreat.

A Hermanus police spokesman said resignedly yesterday that the events of Sunday – the second incident that day involving poachers – were becoming an "everyday" occurrence.

Hermanus policemen, particularly uniformed members ("they are the ones who go out and catch them"), faced all manner of threats from the poachers, including death threats, physical and verbal abuse, being forced off the road and being told that it was known where they and their loved ones live.

The best the Hermanus police can muster against well-organised, cellphone-wielding thugs is seven members per shift, four of whom patrol a 45km-long stretch of coastline – and they must also deal with other crimes.

There were 13 burglaries in Hermanus last week alone, for instance.

"The intimidation against our men is very serious.

"Sunday could easily have had worse consequences," said the spokesman, who himself did not want to be named.

Hawston residents did not want to talk about the poachers, particularly to strangers, but a commercial fisherman at the village's deserted little harbour confirmed the police's contention that the poachers were gangsters – he called them "lice" – and that they cowed the community into acquiescence and actively went after the undermanned police.

"The police can't even come down here – they get stones and abuse hurled at them," the fisherman said.

The fisherman said the poachers, who were nevertheless in the minority, were systematically stripping the coastline of perlemoen and crayfish.

This was borne out by the police spokesman, who said that so far this year 1 277 crayfish tails, 542 crayfish, 1 681 undersize crayfish, 55 uncleaned perlemoen, 60 unshucked, undersize perlemoen and 5 582 shucked perlemoen – which may not be transported – had been confiscated, with 25 suspects arrested.

He conceded, however, that this was "but a drop" compared with what was actually being stolen, but he was nevertheless upbeat about the statistics.

"It at least shows that we are doing something."

Only drugs exceed trade in endangered species

(56)

David Greybe BD 19/3/98

CAPE TOWN — Illegal trade in endangered species in SA was worth hundreds of millions of rands a year and was exceeded only by drugs trafficking, the head of the Endangered Species Protection Unit, Superintendent Pieter Lategan, told Parliament yesterday.

Policing was poor because of underfunding and fragmented law enforcement by provinces, Lategan told the environmental affairs and tourism committee.

Law enforcers faced the "ridiculous" legal situation where the crossing of a border, in many cases a bridge over a river, made the difference between a R20 000 or R200 fine.

"Without a uniform approach, nature-conservation law enforcement is doomed," he warned and called for a single national policy for every species covered by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Law enforcement structures also needed to be upgraded, but because the unit's work was not regarded a priority in the police, additional funding had to be raised outside government circles.

The unit had been unable to open provincial offices because it had only 50 members. Due to the specialist nature of its work, which also covers illegal trade in toxic waste and cultural artefacts, at least 10 members a province were needed.

"The only solution to this confusion is the proposed endangered species act, which will assist greatly in addressing the lack of uniformity," Lategan said.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism Deputy Minister Peter Mokaba, who attended the briefing, said he agreed with Lategan.

He said Lategan would be invited to contribute to the drafting of the proposed legislation which, he hoped, would be finalised this year.

Lategan said the customs-control system had to overhauled. Contraband, including ivory and rhino horn, entered and left SA "with very little chance of detection".

He described as "reckless" the statement by the department that it would rely on nongovernmental organisations to monitor poaching trends.

Since January 1996, Lategan's unit had confiscated 50 rhino horns and ivory equivalent to 209 elephant tusks. However, it was impossible to say whether this made up 10% or 90% of the illegal trade.

Asked whether the Cites downlisting of elephant populations in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia was a solution, Lategan said such a step was premature.

SA should rather step up the training of officials at points of entry in the application of the Cites convention and in the identification of endangered species. It should also ratify the Lusaka agreement on regional co-operative enforcement measures, which would ease the administrative difficulties hampering cross-border and undercover operations, Lategan said.

stoning the police. There is no chance.

ARG 19/3/98

Animal trade 'out of control'

(56)

Illegal trade in endangered species of animals and plants was out of control, says the chief of the endangered species police unit.

Superintendent Pieter Lategan told the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Environment and Tourism that illegal trade was estimated at "hundreds of millions of rands" each year.

He derided the Government for trying to open trade in rhinoceros products.

He said there was no evidence to suggest significant illegal trade in rhino horn products from South Africa.

"In actual fact, we simply do not know what is coming into or leaving South Africa," he said.

He said the most serious problems were a lack of comprehensive legislation, inconsistent policies and poorly trained border post officers. – Sapa-AFP

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Permission refused for Kruger Park ore pipeline

(56) POD 20/3/98

SA NATIONAL Parks has refused permission for a R750m pipeline through Kruger National Park to feed ore slurry to an iron and steel project for Maputo.

National parks spokesman Ron Emery said yesterday the decision was based on fears that the pipeline to Maputo — part of a R9,1bn iron and steel project in the Mozambican capital — could compromise conservation ethics in the park.

"The developers will now consider the option of laying the pipeline from Phalaborwa around the Kruger National Park along the Kaapmuiden route, or transporting the magnetite by rail," Emery said.

The iron and steel plant is expected to consume 6-million tons of ore each year for the next 30 years.

Emery said environmentalists were also opposed to laying a slurry pipeline around the park, as the nine megalitres of water needed daily to transport the magnetite to Maputo would come from the Olifants River. "The Olifants River has dried up before and some farmers in the area have gone broke because of water problems."

Projected figures for development and population growth along the Olifants River were vague, making it difficult to determine future pressures on the river.

Emery said environmentalists favoured transporting the ore by rail as this would use little or no water and there was already a railway line. "Also, the developers can get on with the project, instead of waiting for legal matters or servitude issues to be sorted out."

Feasibility studies and environmental impact assessments on the project will be completed by next month and construction is expected to begin by the year-end.

The project, facilitated by the Industrial Development Council (IDC), is expected to generate a yearly income of R66m for Palabora Mining Company, R217m for Iscor and shipping companies, R3,1m in harbour fees in Maputo, and R39,7m in taxes for the Mozambican government.

Last year the project was delayed to allow more time for feedback on environmental issues and to give the public more time to study an environmental impact report that was being compiled.

Process facilitator Tisha Greyling said at the time that the deadline for comments on the environmental assessment, originally set for August 22, should be extended to September 22.

"The quality and quantity of water in the lower Olifants River catchment area, legal constraints, international conventions affecting SA and Mozambique and current land use were some issues reviewed by the forum," Greyling said. — Sapa.

PUTPROP

MAIL & GUARDIAN
March 20 to 26 1998

Bombs found at domestic dump

M+G 20-26/3/98 (56)

Ann Eveleth

A sign outside the Kudube Waste Disposal Site in Temba township near Hammanskraal warns: "No hazardous or toxic materials allowed." But it also tells visitors: "All persons and vehicles entering this site do so at their own risk."

Both warnings go unnoticed by the dozens of Temba residents picking through the rubbish for treasures like the kitchen waste dumped by the Carousel gambling complex; walking through the dump to their homes; or playing on heaps of dirt.

It was here that 25-year-old Glenton Monnane lost most of his left hand last June. "I picked up something from the ground that looked like a straight pin and I wanted it for one of the cars I was fixing. I was struggling to pick it up when it exploded," said Monnane, a motor mechanic.

Two fingers are missing and his palm is a bubble of flesh grafted from his groin. His chest is a map of shrapnel scars, as is the cornea of one eye.

Brits bomb squad investigators blamed his injuries on a practice grenade detonator. They found seven of these in the vicinity of the blast.

The nearby Hammanskral Police Training College and the Wallmansthal army base both use the dump, but both claim they only dispose of "household" waste there.

Monnane is not the only casualty of explosions in the vicinity. Five-year-old Annatjie died last July when she picked up a rifle grenade, allegedly 800m from the Wallmansthal border.

Her mother, Caroline Khutumela, had sent her to gather firewood. "But they didn't bring wood home, just that thing. I only saw later that they were playing with it, but it exploded before I could stop her. We all ran. When I came back, Annatjie was lying in blood and it had blown her hands off. The face was black and the knees were raw. It was too late," she said.

Khutumela and her son, Johannes, were both injured in the blast, and are complainants with Monnane in a case the Pretoria Legal Resources Centre is investigating related to the disposal of weapons.

A Department of Defence representative declined to comment pending the potential legal action, but claimed that although the Wallmansthal unit dumps at Hammanskraal, "no ammunition [is] dumped with household waste. After every shooting exercise all duds ... are destroyed.

"Possibly due to human error ... unexploded duds are left behind. It is for this reason that the areas [around the base] are regularly swept."

But Joseph Baloyi, who lives in a shack in the centre of the dump, remembers "some times when big explosions happened here. The soldiers used to dump them, but no more. Now they've shifted to Durabuild." He points to a building 1km away.

The *Mail & Guardian* found a spent automatic rifle cartridge in the pile of rubbish behind the building after spending five minutes there. Only the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the South African Police Service use such magazines.

Police training college deputy commissioner Superintendent Charles Masemola admitted they have used the dump "since the establishment of this college in 1972". But he also claimed that only "garden refuse, tins and so forth" were ever dumped there.

Group for Environmental Monitoring representative Richard Sherman said such incidents were common. Land claimants on defence force land have complained that the SANDF has polluted land under claim in Masita and Lohatla.

The SANDF admitted recently that unexploded shells could be lying around in parts of the Greater St Lucia Wetlands Parks it once used for a base, and several 127 missiles were discovered in Sodwana Bay last year.

"The disposal of ammunition falls under the explosives Act ... but at Wallmansthal they were clearly in violation of their own rules," said Sherman. "I don't think it's as simple as getting ammunition mixed up with household waste. It's negligence."

Temba mayor Joseph Letlape, said the military is not contracted to dump anything at Kudube. "The only people we have arrangements with is Carousel," he says.

Moves to register dump sites in South Africa only began with the 1989 Environmental Conservation Act. Department of Water Affairs and Forestry assistant permitting director Gerrie le Roux says only 294 of the estimated 1 200 to 1 600 dumps have completed the permitting process.

Gauteng regional permitting official Bertus Oelofse confirmed that Kudube had applied for a permit and said the process did not require them to disclose who dumped there.

"They just have to say what kind of waste is dumped there. Kudube says no toxic or hazardous wastes are delivered to the site," he said, referring queries to his legal adviser.

Bid to kill off toxic algae could backfire

Salt plan could have 'dire consequences'

ARG 21/3/98 (56)

DIANA PELLATT

The proposal to dump 300 tons of salt into Wildevoëlvlei to kill the toxic blue-green algae poisoning shellfish in nearby Kommetjie, may have dire consequences, a water expert has warned.

The plan must be thoroughly investigated, says Brian Allanson, former director of the Institute for Freshwater Research at Rhodes University.

Professor Allanson said the environmental management board's proposal to drop salt in the water would cause the algae to die.

However, the algae would continue to be a threat as it would drop to the bottom, rot and expel more toxins, which could kill remaining animal life.

Professor Allanson said that, although the disruption would be temporary, it would take time for the vlei to recover.

He said the algae could be flushed out during winter if it rained enough, but there was no guarantee this would solve the problem.

He said the cause should be rooted out and, if possible, eliminated.

Phosphorous and nitrogen, which compound the problem, are found in all fresh water, but when their levels of concentration increase, blue-green algae can grow to alarming proportions.

Professor Allanson said effluent from sewerage plants and stormwater increased phosphorous and nitrogen levels.

When sewage went through treatment works, phosphorous in the waste was converted to phosphate. While some phosphate was lost, sufficient remained to pollute the water.

Sewerage works operated according to standards set by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. These standards stated the allowable amounts of phosphorous and nitrogen in the remaining effluent.

With all the urban development in Noordhoek over the past few years, environmental experts were concerned whether or not sewerage works had coped with the overload of waste.

Glen Ashton of the Friends of Wildevoëlvlei has said the public's concern about inadequate sewerage facilities in the area has been mostly ignored.

'Concern about inadequate sewage facilities was mostly ignored'

Professor Allanson said that once the immediate problem was resolved, sewerage systems in the Noordhoek area must be reviewed.

He also said the quality of the stormwater must be investigated. In a natural, undisturbed area, stormwater seeped through the earth or ran in rivers and streams to estuaries and the sea.

However, when it rained, drainage from hard non-absorbing surfaces of urban areas collected organic debris, depositing it in the vleis.

The concentration of phosphorous and nitrogen in the waste rose to levels which allowed the rapid growth of blue-green algae, turning the vlei into a green soup of toxicity.

In the early 1980s the Cape Town engineers department called on Professor Allanson to advise them on how to improve the quality of the stormwater draining into Sandvlei and Zeekoevlei.

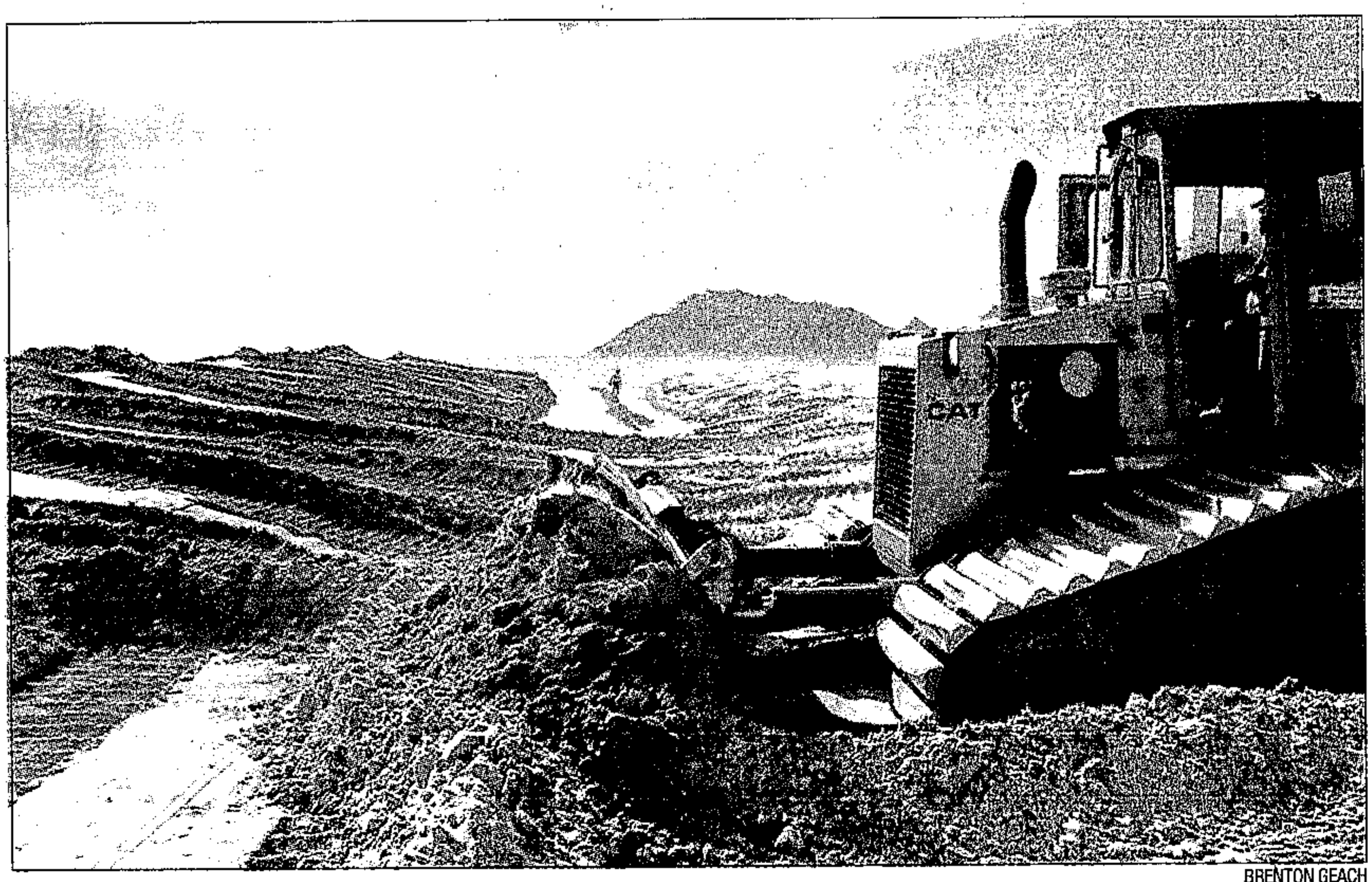
His proposals, and those of colleagues, notably Professor Bryan Davies and Dr Bill Harding, emphasised the importance of "clean housekeeping".

By following these recommendations, he said it had been possible to maintain the quality of the water in these areas.

He said the solution was simple, on one hand: remove the phosphorous from the sewage effluent and improve the quality of stormwater.

On the other hand, this was technically difficult and expensive. New sewerage works can cost millions of rands.

Professor Allanson said he hoped Professor Davies's and Dr Harding's skills and understanding of these problems would be acted on.



BRENTON GEACH

Unblocked: in an effort to save the Wildevoëlvlei from toxic blue-green algae, workers have started bulldozing open the estuary mouth

Bulldozers enlisted in battle to save Wildevoëlvlei

ARG 21/3/98 (56)

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WARING

In an effort to save the severely contaminated Wildevoëlvlei from toxic blue-green algae, municipal workers have started bulldozing open the mouth of the estuary at Kommetjie.

Dr Julia Woods said the desperate state of the wetland had forced the South Peninsula's team of experts to use drastic measures to save the vlei. The plan is to lower the level of the vlei by releasing millions of litres of vlei water through the mouth of the estuary. About 300 tons of salt will then be dropped into the vlei as shock treatment to kill the blue-green algae.

The dying algae are expected to release even more toxins which, in the short term , will increase the toxins in the mussels and shellfish in the sea near the mouth of the estuary.

Dr Woods admitted this could pose a huge health risk, but said signs alerting people to the dangers of eating the contaminated mussels would be erected in prominent places.

She said officials were particularly concerned about people living close to the vlei as it would not be easy to inform them of the danger, particularly as many could not read.

The municipality will also station officials at the mussel beds to warn people of contamination.

Residents on the banks of the vlei were also concerned about airborne toxins that could be released once the the water level had been lowered and algae exposed.

But Dr Woods said a monitors would be placed on the bank to keep tabs on the situation.

■ A public meeting will take place at Fish Hoek civic centre on Thursday evening to inform people of plans to save and rehabilitate the vlei.

Morkel to monitor R350-m fuel pipe plan

Proposal's controversy grows

ARG 21/3/98 (56)

WILLEM STEENKAMP

Gerald Morkel, the Western Cape Minister of Community Safety and Environmental Affairs, has vowed to protect the Western Cape against projects that could threaten the environment.

Mr Morkel was reacting to a controversial proposal by the Strategic Fuel Fund (SFF) to pipe imported petrol and diesel through an undersea pipeline in Table Bay to an oil depot near Milnerton.

If the project is approved the Government-controlled SFF will import petrol, jet fuel, diesel and other oil products and pipe them ashore to its old tank farm near Milnerton.

Refined oil products will be offloaded from supertankers to a controversial new, single-point mooring facility to be constructed in the sea between Robben Island and Bloubergstrand.

The fuel products will be pumped through a submerged pipeline that will run along the ocean floor to a point north of Bloubergstrand and then south-east to the Milnerton tank farm near the Caltex refinery.

If the plan is approved, the fuel products will be sold directly to emerging black companies and delivered by road transport from the tank farm.

The R350-million plan has been criticised by environmentalists, who say the project would put the Cape's picturesque beaches at risk. They say one major oil spill could have a devastating effect on the economy of the region, which is largely fuelled by tourism.

Sources in the oil industry maintain that the project is not financially viable because of transport and other costs.

They have suggested that oil storage facilities at Saldanha Bay be used to store refined fuel products which could then be pumped via an existing pipeline from Saldanha to Cape Town.

Mr Morkel said: "I am intensely aware of the serious concern that exists relating to the advisability of the proposed development of a single-point mooring facility and pipeline in Table Bay.

"At this stage the project is merely a proposal and in the very early stages of consideration.

"I am pleased to hear that the SFF has commissioned a full environmental impact assessment by the CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research) and Crowther Campbell Associates.

"These consultants have already made preliminary contact with officials of Cape Nature Conservation. It has been agreed that the environmental aspects of the SFF's proposal will be dealt with in terms of the recently published regulations under the Environmental Conservation Act."

He said if the project went ahead, comprehensive environmental management systems and measures would have to be put into place.

Bothasig, Bloubergstrand, Table View and Milnerton residents have expressed concern about the storage of fuel near their neighbourhoods and have said they will fight the proposal.

Land deal expands Kruger park

BD 24/3/98 (56)

Louise Cook

PRETORIA — A deal between SA National Parks and a community which lodged a restitution claim on land in the Kruger National Park will see the park expand in the north to incorporate a new area, Banyini Pans, known internationally for its rich and diverse bird life.

The pans, consisting of 5 000ha of land belonging to the Northern Province in the Madimbo corridor, will be reserved for conservation.

The deal will also give 1 800 families of the Makuleke community a stake in SA's lucrative conservation and ecotourism industry.

The total area claimed — 25 000ha in the Northern Province and the Kruger National Park adjacent to the Limpopo River — will be returned to the community, which was forcibly removed 30 years ago under the former government's homelands policy.

Makuleke community spokesman Lamson Makuleke said in Pretoria yesterday various types of tent accommodation, as well as wilderness trails and a cultural route, were planned in an area that lacked any facilities for tourists at present. "Our dream to have our ancestral land returned to us has come true. For many years we have wanted to get involved in nature conservation and ecotourism."

The land — to be known as the Makuleke region — would be managed jointly by the Makuleke community and SA National Parks for the next 50 years. Farming, mining and permanent residence would be forbidden.

SA National Parks CEO Mavuso Msimang said the move was a conservation breakthrough. "It ensures the ecological integrity of the Kruger National Park is protected while rights to land restitution are accommodated."

Comment: Page 13

ANC blasts new Cape planning legislation

(56)

'Heritage at risk'

ARG 24/3/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The African National Congress has slammed the the Western Cape government's draft Planning and Development Bill, saying it threatens the natural environment and entrenches old-style apartheid planning.

The ANC says it is reserving its right to take the bill to the Constitutional Court, claiming it runs contrary to national legislation in the form of the Development Facilitation Bill, adopted by Parliament in 1995.

The ANC is being supported by the Cape Town City Council, and a range of ratepayers' associations and non-government environmental organisations.

The provincial government's standing committee is due to hold two days of public hearings on the bill, starting today, but there is concern that the hearings – which have already been re-scheduled three times – may be delayed yet again.

At a media conference yesterday, the ANC provincial spokesperson on development and planning, Garth Strachan, said the party was "extremely concerned" about the way the National Party-dominated provincial legislature was handling the draft bill.

"We would like to suggest that the process of public accountability and transparency in a matter of crucial concern – especially to the environment – is being dealt with in a cavalier fashion," he said.

Among its criticisms, it says the bill:

- Ensures the continuation of apartheid planning.
- Gives "only a perfunctory bow" to environmental concerns.
- Vests arbitrary discretionary power in the hands of the provincial planning minister.
- Runs contrary to South Africa's model of co-operative governance.
- Ignores the need to introduce legislation and policies which address the injustices of the past.

Cape Town city councillor Revel Fox told the media conference the city was concerned as provisions for public participation were "severely inhibited".

Environmentalist Alida Croudace of the Red Hill Landowners Association said association's main concerns about the draft bill were the powers proposed for the minister and the sharp reduction in public participation in planning.

Because of the Western Cape's unique natural heritage, it was vital to include sound environmental management procedures into any development framework.

IT'S YOURS, IT'S MINE

Kruger National Park celebrates centenary

CT 24/3/98 (56)

JOHANNESBURG: The importance of preserving parks lies in a symbiotic relationship between the park and the neighbouring communities, says National Parks' marketing manager.

PRESIDENT Nelson Mandela will launch the Kruger National Park's centenary year celebrations at a function at Skukusa on Thursday to be attended by senior government officials, provincial premiers, the park's staff and local community representatives.

The year's theme is *Xhamina Xhawena* — a Shangaan expression meaning "it's yours, it's mine".

This week's celebrations will set in motion the year's programme, highlighting issues such as conservation, community involvement, youth education and the promotion of all South Africa's national parks as tourist destinations.

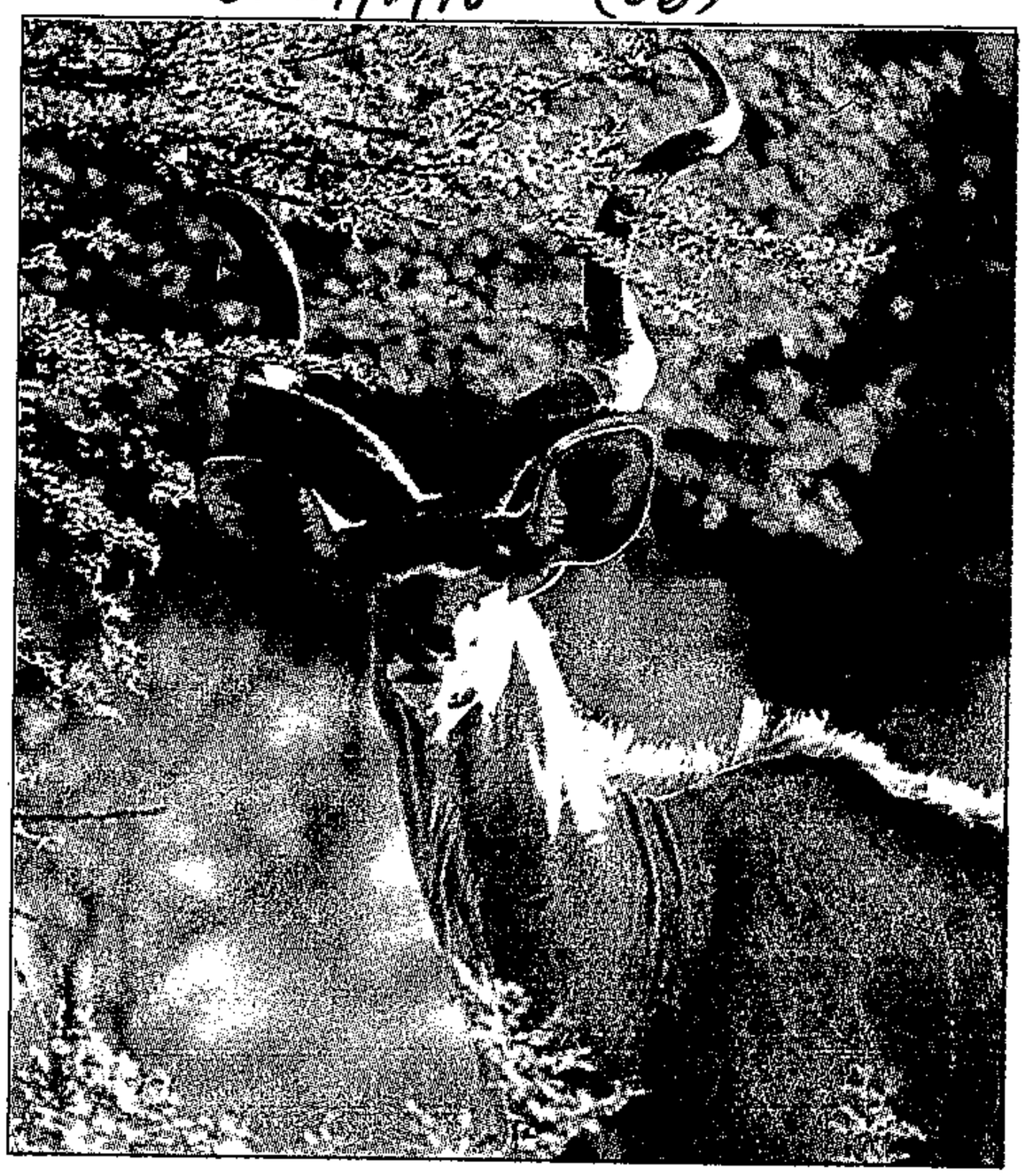
As a prelude to the celebrations a video, *Kruger Park 100 — the vision lives on,* will be launched tomorrow night.

The centenary promises to be one of the biggest events of the decade, National Parks senior marketing manager Mr Mmatsatsi Ramawela said in a statement, adding the celebrations would be sponsored.

Referring to the theme of the celebrations, Ramawela said: "We want to stress that the importance of preserving the natural state of all the parks lies in the symbiotic relationship that exists between the parks and the neighbouring communities."

A South African National Parks statement said: "History has recorded some of the rancour related to land dispossession and the exclusion of blacks that accompanied the establishment of the park. Even as we take stock of those issues, there is no doubt that the celebration of the centenary will attract enormous attention, both locally and internationally."

First named the Sabie Game Reserve when the Transvaal Volksraad proclaimed a reserve between the Crocodile and Sabi rivers in 1898, it was subsequently enlarged and renamed Kruger National Park in 1926, when it was proclaimed South Africa's first national park.



BENEFICIARY: This fine Kudu bull is a present-day beneficiary of a conservation effort that began 100 years ago. *PICTURE: GARTH STEAD*

The Kruger Park has become a key player in the field of Afro-tourism.

It is Africa's largest game reserve in one country and one of the oldest in the world.

Since the first three vehicles entering the park in 1927, the conservation area has been developed into one of South Africa's most popular natural attractions.

It is estimated that almost a million people will visit the park this year.

Directly and indirectly, the Kruger Park supports about 2 500 people. It also plays a vital role in the local economy by supporting an entire satellite tourism industry, ranging from huge timeshare complexes to farm stalls and small businesses.

National parks were owned by the people and held in trust by South African National Parks, chief executive Mr Mavuso Msimang said in a statement.

"Much still needs to be done to instil a sense of pride and an understanding of the role that national parks play in many sectors of South African society.

"Progress has been made in the commercial upliftment of the communities that border the Kruger National Park and other national parks ... However, more needs to be done in this regard, and, once again, the centenary offers this opportunity."

While conservationists had done an excellent job of preserving South Africa's most precious treasures, Msimang hoped that the future would bring co-operation in the conservation of the country's natural heritage and sustainable eco-tourism development. — Sapa

Makuleke community regain land

PRETORIA: The Makuleke community, who were removed in 1968 from land now within the borders of the Kruger National Park, have regained their property rights in terms of an agreement with SA National Parks.

National Parks chief executive Mr Mavuso Msimang told reporters both parties were satisfied with the agreement.

It allows for about 25 000 hectares of land, known as the Pafuri area, to be returned to the community, while maintaining the conservation status of the land.

The agreement also provides for 5 000 hectares of the Madimbo corridor, jointly owned by the SA National Defence Force and Northern Province government, to be included in the Kruger Park.

Msimang said the breakthrough, which followed more than 18 months of intensive negotiations, would enable the community to use the land for their own economic upliftment by becoming involved in eco-tourism, among other things. National Parks would continue to manage the conservation of the area.

In terms of the agreement, to be signed on April 18, there may be no mining, farming or permanent residence in the area without the permission of National Parks.

A joint management body will be responsible for the overall management of the area.

Makuleke community spokesperson Mr Livingstone Maluleke said the community, consisting of about 1 800 families, were keen to become involved in the conservation of the area, which would in future be known as the Makuleke region.

He said about 20 members of the community were being trained in business management and conservation.

The community was living in Ntlhaveni, about 60km from the Pafuri area.

Msimang said the Pafuri area was extremely important, partly due to its archaeological sites, and the large number of endemic species found there.

Maluleke said the agreement should serve as a model for other communities in similar situations.

The agreement would be submitted to the Land Claims Court soon and then to Parliament for consideration. — Sapa

ET 24/3/98 (56)

Keen overseas interest in Oudekraal hotel sale

DAN SIMON
TOURISM WRITER

WILL it open its doors as a world-class hotel with five-star status as was originally intended, or will it be downgraded to a three- or four-star establishment?

Then again, what if the interior is structurally modified and the development is then marketed internationally as an exclusive hydro in one of the world's hippest tourist destinations?

There is no shortage of suggestions about how to complete the incomplete De Oudekraal hotel.

The auction tomorrow is being billed as "Africa's biggest hotel auction" and, according to city auctioneer Mr Jonathon Smiedt, of Claremart Auctioneers, "tremendous interest" is being shown in the controversial development by local and international investors.

Smiedt said he had received over 60 inquiries about the property. Of these, about 15 had been from overseas.

"Some interested parties say they will complete it as a five-star hotel. Another option being mooted is a three- or four-star hotel. One idea also being bandied about is a hydro."

The property was put into final liquidation earlier this year after developer Mr Steve Jones, of Hottentots Huisie, failed to meet certain financial obligations with Standard Corporate and Merchant Bank.

Standard Corporate and Merchant is owed R33 million on the incomplete development, and the two main contractors, Murray and Roberts and Grinaker Building, are owed about R5m.

An audit of the development has noted that R40m has been spent on the development so far and that a further R8m will have to be spent by the new owner to complete the building to five-star standards.

Construction at the site is at an advanced stage. Four of the five blocks of 70 rooms and suites are more than 80% complete. The undercover parking for 153 cars is 95% complete.

Three SA hotel groups and a construction company are among the investors showing a keen interest in the property. Investors from the US, the UK and Malaysia have also made inquiries.

As one of the city's top auctioneers, and not wanting to put his reputation on the line, Smiedt was hesitant to guess, but said the opening bid could be somewhere between R15m and R20m.

"There are a host of overseas buyers, and what makes it attractive is the exchange rate."

And the final price? "I think the development as it stands is worth between R25m and R30m."

But Standard Corporate and Merchant is unlikely to let the property go for less than the R33m it is owed.

One sub-contractor who is owed more than R230 000, hopes the final price will be closer to the R40m mark.

Mr Pat Richards of UPVC is owed R80 000 which he lodged as a performance guarantee and a further R151 000 for work done to date, including windows that are lying complete in his factory.

"It will cost the new owner R40m to satisfy all the creditors and this does not take into account what must still be done.

"Unless someone comes in and pays what is owed, people will lose. If someone comes in and only pays the bank R33m, a lot of people will lose," Richards said.

'BAD COUNCIL DECISIONS ARE DESTROYING GARDEN ROUTE'

Plett development outrage

RESIDENTS say a massive complex which was illegally approved by council has permanently scarred the skyline. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

CT 24/3/98

(56)

PROVINCIAL authorities have told the Plettenberg Bay town council it had no legal right to approve the controversial Castleton development, a massive housing complex on Plett's skyline that has drawn fierce criticism from locals.

Extensions to Castleton, now called Waterberry Ridge, which are still to be built, were also illegally approved by the council.

Residents say this is another example of bungling by local councils on the Garden Route. Many believe the area is being rapidly destroyed by bad development which has been rubber-stamped by local authorities.

Plett's municipality said it did not know that it had no delegated powers to approve high density developments which are not adjacent to the CBD.

Said town clerk Mr Ken Roelofsz: "It's all very well to say we should have known what powers we had and we didn't have, but we've got a huge area — 1 200 sq km — under us and it is just far too big for this local authority to control. Large local authorities like Cape Town have a legal department to sort these things out. We are under huge pressure and the town planner's department was obviously not aware of this lack of delegated power."

So far 129 of the 390 Castleton housing units have been built. A further 261 units, an 80-bedroomed hotel and a shopping centre have been approved by the council, but have not yet been built. The developers have now applied to have the shopping centre increased from 5 000 sq m to 8 000 sq m.

"It needs to be mentioned that the Castleton development resulted in a prominent change of the character of the environment," the letter said, and recommended that the application be referred to their department for consideration.

It also said "no detailed development proposals" for the application were available.

Roelofsz said: "The last I heard was that the application for the 261 houses and for the extensions to the shopping area would have to be referred to the provincial authorities. We have not had a reply from them."

> *'The council approved the development three years ago, so we will go ahead and build it'*

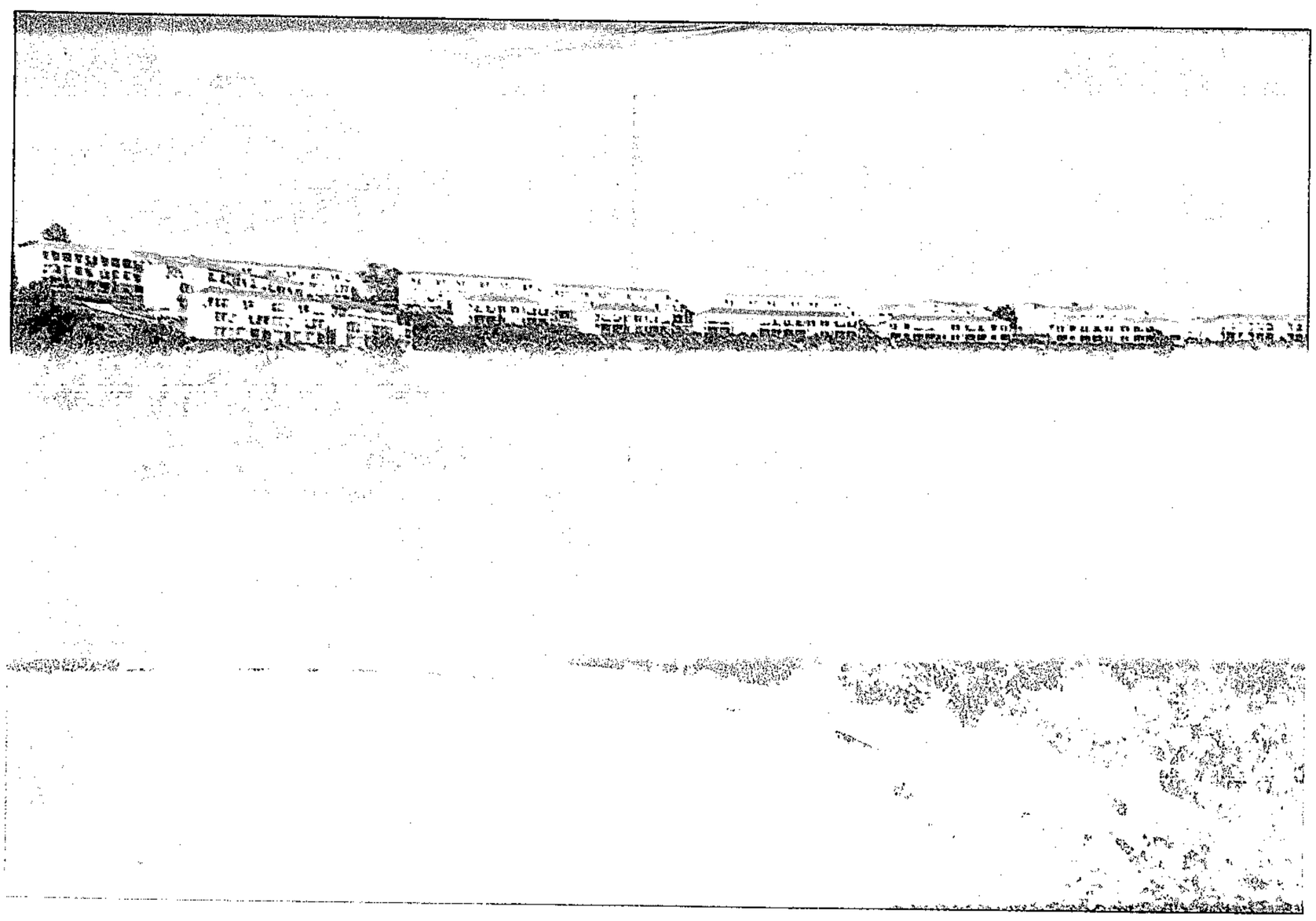
Mr Martin Rattray, a member of Plett's Aesthetic Committee, appointed by the council, said they had strongly recommended to the council that the Castleton/Waterberry development not go ahead.

"We are infuriated that they disfigured Plett's entrance by allowing this development. The council appointed the Aesthetic Committee, which works very hard, but they utterly ignore everything we say."

The developers, Castleton Properties, told the *Cape Times* they would sue the Plett council if they were prohibited from continuing.

One of the directors, Mr Johan Weyers, said yesterday the company had "no knowledge" of the letter from Province, while another director, Mr Peet Cilliers, said he knew of the letter but said that province had subsequently told the council it could go ahead.

Said Weyers: "The council approved the development three years ago, so we will go ahead and build it. There's no question of that. And if they try to stop us, there will be a big legal battle ahead."



EYESORE: Provincial authorities say Plettenberg Bay's local council had no legal authority to approve the controversial Castleton development. Another 261 housing units are in the pipeline.

PICTURE: ANNE LAING

Asmal's conservation, jobs plan to 'tread water'

CT 24/3/98 (56)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

TENS of thousands of people, drawn from the ranks of the poor and marginalised, stand to lose their jobs if the Department of Water Affairs' Working for Water programme does not soon get adequate funding.

The programme, initiated by Water Affairs Minister Professor Kader Asmal in 1995, employs over 40 000 people nationwide in projects which enhance both the natural environment by clearing alien vegetation and improving water supply, and the social environment by providing work and community empowerment in rural areas.

Many of the projects will be suspended in April for a month, when workers will not be paid, while the department waits to hear if the cabinet will approve a grant from the R500 million Poverty Relief Fund.

This fund granted the Working for Water project a massive boost of R150m in November last year, which had to be spent by March.

Asmal said at a media briefing that until the announcement of the Poverty Relief Fund grants the programme would have to "tread water".

Asmal said the programme had set a target of 40 000 jobs in nine provinces, focusing on the rural areas, and that the return on the investment had been "exceptionally high".

ON HOLD: Kader Asmal will have to wait for more funds for his project.

"The report card at the end of the financial year is expected to show that at least 94% of the budget was spent in creating over 40 000 jobs, with a multitude of benefits for poverty relief and sustainable development in our country," Asmal said.

Programme co-ordinator Dr Guy Preston said alien vegetation like blue gums, black wattle, rooikrans and seringa used far more water than indigenous vegetation, sucking up water like windmills.

"Eradicating these aliens through labour-intensive programmes in the Western Cape, for example, can increase the water supply by 30% at about five percent of the cost of building dams," Preston said.

So far about 80 000ha of land has been cleared of aliens, making rivers that had almost dried up flow again. The eradication has also reduced flooding, siltation of dams and improved water quality and the recharging of ground water.

"It has also contributed to the development of communities and to the empowerment of women, as 53% of our workers are women. There are all sorts of welfare aspects that the project has addressed, for instance crèches have been built for the workers' children, and by employing more women than men, the money is more likely to go to the home and children.

"We're also talking to banks to work special deals for these workers, so they are not trapped in the loan shark syndrome," Preston said.

The programme now employs 40 623 people in 240 projects throughout the country.

'Too much power' for MEC

(56) CT 24/3/98

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE ANC and local environmental organisations have hit out at the Western Cape's Planning and Development Bill as "developer-driven" and a danger to the environment.

At a media briefing yesterday an ANC member of the provincial legislature, Mr Garth Strachan, said the bill was designed to protect the old apartheid system of power and privilege and gave the MEC for planning discretionary powers that were far greater than those conferred by present legislation.

Regarding rezoning and sub-division, he said, the new bill would give:

- "Unlimited and therefore unconstitutional powers" to the MEC.
- Authority to the provincial government to inform the public in a limited and ineffectual way.
- The MEC absolute power to authorise sub-divisions, even when the rezoning had not been completed.

It would also give the MEC power to overrule local authorities.

Ms Lesley Ashton of the Atlantic Seaboard Association, said: "One of the many bad things about the bill is that if we appeal about a decision, we do so to the same minister who made the decision in the first place."

'If we appeal about a decision, we do so to the same minister who made the decision.'

Mr Gianni Lovisola, spokesperson for the Llandudno Civic Association, said the bill was founded on no principles, which meant the MEC could "virtually do what he wants".

"All the democratic processes have been kidnapped by the power of the MEC. If he doesn't want something, it won't be done.

"The MEC also has the power to exempt anyone from the rules. It allows for the removal of title deed restrictions," Lovisola said.

ANC spokesman Mr Cameron Dugmore said the Western Cape was the only province not to implement the Development Facilitation Act, which laid down general principles governing land development throughout the country.

"The bill is unconstitutional and is an attempt by the National Party to completely control development in the province," Dugmore said.

Makuleke community gets its Kruger Park land back

(56) (231) Star 24/3/98

By Melanie-Ann Ferris
Environment Reporter

The Northern Province community of Makuleke, which has been granted a portion of the Kruger National Park in an historic land claims settlement, announced yesterday it is planning to develop a tourist camp in the area.

The terms of the agreement, announced by the South African National Parks (SANP) in Pretoria, state that the community will not be able to live permanently on the property, nor farm or mine it, unless given permission by the SANP.

They are, however, allowed to look into the possibility of erecting small, low-impact tent accommodation aimed at the luxury market. They may also build wilderness trails and a cultural route, including a traditional museum.

The agreement, reached after 18 months of negotiations, allows the community to gain control of about 25 000ha of land which they lost through forced removals in 1968.

The agreement will also allow for 5 000ha of the Madimbo Corridor, controlled by the South African National Defence Force and the Northern Province, and which falls outside the Kruger Park, to now be included in the management of the park.

Makuleke spokesman Livingstone Makuleke said the community's plans were just at the initial stages but already young members of the community were being registered for courses to help in the development of the area.

Terre'Blanche will not testify in amnesty case

PRETORIA — Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) leader Eugene Terre'Blanche was not interested in testifying in support of a right-winger seeking amnesty for murder, the truth commission heard yesterday.

Daan Mosterd, acting for applicant Cornelius Lottering, said he had asked Terre'Blanche on Monday night to give evidence. Mosterd also tried to get hold of Hennie Binneman, a former comrade of Lottering.

"Neither of them are interested in testifying," Mosterd said.

Lottering is seeking amnesty for three offences, including the killing of taxi driver Potoko Makgalemele in Johannesburg on August 29 1989. In the same year he committed armed robbery and escaped from custody.

At the time he was a member of an AWB breakaway group, Orde van die Dood (Order of Death). Lottering contends that he was acting on the instruction of his commander, Dawie de Beer, to further the right-wing cause for a separate Afrikaner homeland.

Lottering is serving a sentence of 21 years for his crimes.

After former AWB Brig Dries Kriel testified in support of Lottering on Monday afternoon, Mosterd said he also intended approaching Terre'Blanche and Binneman to give evidence.

The hearing was adjourned yesterday when neither turned up.

Amnesty committee chairman Judge Selwyn Miller ruled that Mosterd's written argument in support of the application should be submitted by Friday.

Kriel accused the AWB leadership on Monday of leaving members serving prison sentences in the lurch.

"The people who gave the orders are too cowardly to come and sit here in support of those people in jail," he said.

The amnesty applications of two other right wingers, James Wheeler and Cornelius Pyper, will be heard today.

They were convicted of murder and attempted murder after firing at a minibus taxi on the road between Westonaria and Randfontein on April 27 1994.

Vuyani Papuuyana was killed and his brother Godfrey wounded in the shooting. — Sapa.

BD 25/3/98

Insults led to killings, truth commission hears

BD 25/3/98

DURBAN — The truth commission yesterday heard applications for amnesty from two Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) members who killed two African National Congress (ANC) supporters after becoming enraged by political insults.

The commission's amnesty committee is hearing applications for amnesty from IFP supporters who have been charged with murders at different times during the years of conflict between the IFP and the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal between 1990 and 1992.

Nimrod Mthembu and Shengu Ngobese were convicted, and are serving jail sentences for the murder of a woman, Zondiwe Khumalo, and a man, Siza Ntsele, at Mapamulo near Stanger in 1991.

Mthembu and Ngobese both told the committee during their applications for amnesty that they were loyal members of the IFP and resented and opposed all attempts by the ANC to gain support in their area.

They claimed to have been acting in the best interests of the IFP by removing the ANC from society.

However, they both conceded they received no orders from IFP officials to do so.

Both said they became infuriated by taunts from ANC supporters who referred to IFP supporters as "oklova" and "isitaki".

Asked by committee chairman Hassen Mall to explain what these words meant, Mthembu was unable to do so apart from saying he took them to be derogatory remarks.

He said he was able to identify the people who made these remarks as ANC supporters and he believed it was his duty to eliminate them from society.

Asked if the use of anti-IFP slogans was the only way he identified them, Mthembu replied that Khumalo had opposed the imposition of a dog tax in the area. He said, the tax was imposed by the KwaZulu-Natal government which was controlled by the IFP, so he took her to be an ANC supporter.

The committee is to consider the application and give its decision at a later stage.

The rest of the hearings continue later this week. — Sapa.

Tsitsikamma Nature Reserve faces Covie land rights claim

Deborah Fine

BD 25/3/98

COVIE residents in the Western Cape have lodged a land rights claim for about 450ha of prime eco-tourism land in the Tsitsikamma Nature Reserve.

While they have not claimed ownership of the land, they want access to it for grazing purposes and access to the Indian Ocean along the reserve's southern boundary, or monetary compensation.

Western Cape land commission spokesman Franz Zottl said 30 allotments of two morgen each were given to Covie residents in 1884, with grazing and fishing rights on the adjoining common land.

However, the ocean frontage was declared part of the nature reserve in 1974 and fenced off. Covie residents were removed from the area in 1976.

CAPE ARGUS, **WEDNESDAY**, MARCH 25, 1998

Key talks on Cape national park

ARG 25/3/98 (56)

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

One of the final moves in the long process to establish the Cape Peninsula National Park will be made tomorrow at a special meeting of the Cape Town council's planning and economic development committee.

The committee will consider the sole objection – from the Rondebosch-Rosebank Ratepayers' and Business Association – to the council's "in-principle" decision to transfer its conservation land to the park.

South Peninsula and the Cape Metropolitan councils have already completed the legal process to transfer their land to the park by April 1.

Marius Coetzee, head of the Cape Town parks and forests branch, said the Rondebosch group believed the proposed 99-year lease of the council's land to SA National Parks (formerly the National Parks Board) was too long. The group believed the lease should be limited to between three and five years.

It also questioned the track record of SA National Parks.

Mr Coetzee said he had prepared a report on the objections and this would be put to the meeting tomorrow

The issue would then probably go directly to the full council at its meeting next Tuesday just hours ahead of the agreed deadline.

Kruger Park now changing its image

SOUTH Africa's largest game reserve, the Kruger National Park, celebrates its centenary this week amid efforts to change an image that symbolises decades of racial segregation under apartheid.

(56)

"Shamena Shawena" – "it's mine and it's yours too" in Shangaan, the most widely spoken language in the northeast – is the slogan for the official celebrations that kick off tomorrow in Skukuza, the Kruger's main rest camp in the heart of the reserve.

"Now is the time to reverse the common perception among certain sections of the population that national parks are elitist and reserved for the wealthy," the National Parks authority says.

Like other wildlife reserves in the country, the Kruger Park has remained an exclusive destination for mostly white South Africans and, more recently, has become a popular tourists destination.

Founded in 1898 – to save animals threatened by game hunting – the Sabie Game Reserve became South Africa's leading national park in 1926 and adopted the name of former President Paul Kruger.

Stretching over 2 million hectares, the Kruger Park is home to 24 camps, 12 filling stations, 10 restaurants, 3 512 employees, a post office and a road network of 2 400 kilometres.

About 15 researchers work full-time on topics ranging from HIV-positive lions to contraception for female elephants. The medicinal value of plants used by traditional healers is also under study.

Nearly 900 000 visitors combed the park's trails and roads last year in search of some 8 300 elephant, 2 000 lion, 19 500 buffalo and 2 220 rhinoceros, the game most prized by amateur photographers.

Kruger authorities, however, admit that much needs to be done to develop the full potential of national parks to the economic, social and cultural enrichment of the ordinary South African.

The neighbouring province of Mpumalanga – part of which made up the one-time homeland of Venda under apartheid – is paying the price of a development policy that was less concerned with the local black population than with wild animals. Squatter settlements, poverty and unemployment are rife around the park's borders.

Inside the reserve about 500 water holes have been built for the animals. But on the other side of the fence, women with containers balanced on their heads walk for kilometres to find potable water.

The reserve has embarked on a new approach to environmental management, instituting education programmes and development aid in an attempt to reconcile with neighbouring communities.

Designed "to cool down antagonism", this new philosophy recognises that the future of the park depends on cooperation, Dladla says.

In another signal of Kruger's changing mindset, the national parks authority has resolved, after a long legal battle, to restore 24 000 hectares of land to the Makuleke tribe, chased from the territory in 1969 under the guise of protecting nature.

The park's administration, for a long time dominated by whites, is also changing slowly.

Blacks worked for many years only as cleaners and maintenance staff but today, with the aid of affirmative action, the director of the Kruger is black, as is one of his deputies. – *Sapa-AFP.*

Sowetan 25/3/98

MEC storms out of portfolio committee session

(56) BD 26/3/98

NELSPRUIT — Mpumalanga's beleaguered environmental affairs MEC David Mkhwanazi stormed out of a portfolio committee session last night after refusing to be crossexamined by Mpumalanga Parks Board directors.

He told chairman Manazane Matzimela he refused to be questioned on his motives for trying to dilute the parks board's autonomy through a series of amendments to its enabling act.

Earlier he was unable to answer questions on the consequences of the proposed amendments on the multibillion-rand Dolphin Deal.

Matzimela and committee member Chris MacPherson said the matter would be taken up with provincial ANC chief whip, Fish Mahlalela, and premier Mathews Phosa. — African Eye.

This meant individuals facing

Incomplete Oudekraal project fetches R33,6m

BD 26/7/98 (76)

Samantha Sharpe

CAPE TOWN — The controversial Oudekraal development at the foot of Cape Town's Twelve Apostles raised a R33,6m bid from an unidentified Gauteng buyer at an auction held on site yesterday.

The development, which drew heated protest from environmentalists and religious parties when it was originally mooted, was put into final liquidation earlier this year when developer Steve Jones failed to meet the financial obligations to financier Standard Corporate & Merchant Bank (SCMB).

The bank is allegedly owed R33m on the incomplete development, with the project's two main contractors, Murray & Roberts and Grinaker, reportedly due R5m.

Jonathon Smiedt of Claremont Auctioneers said the identify of the winning bidder would not be disclosed until there was final confirmation that the purchase price had met the liquidators' approval. However, while official acceptance or rejection of the offer would be announced later today, it appeared that a R33,6m price constituted fair market value for the incomplete project, he said.

Details about the ultimate fate of the development — speculation that the intended five star development might be downgraded to a three or four star hotel — would have to wait until the winning bidder disclosed the long term plans for the site.

While construction was at an advanced stage, with most of the 70 rooms and suites close to 80% complete, it was estimated that several million rand would have to be spent to ensure a five-star hotel development.

Smiedt said that between 180 and 200 people attended the auction. Bidding started at R15m and the final offer was R29,5m, which, with VAT added, translated into a R33,6m bid.

Stratcor seeks US waiver of benefit limits

Simon Barber

WASHINGTON — Connecticut-based Strategic Minerals Corporation (Stratcor) has told the US International Trade Commission it will continue expanding its investment in SA if the Clinton administration agrees to extend duty-free treatment of a key product of its SA subsidiary, Vametco.

SA exports to the US of the product — a form of vanadium carbide traded as Nitrovan — have surged recently from close to zero in 1994 to $17,3m last year, making SA the largest foreign source of products in its class.

As a result of the surge, Stratcor may start having to pay a 3,7% duty on its imports from Vametco, which previously entered the US duty-free under the US generalised system of preferences. However, benefits are withdrawn when producers hit so-called competitive need limits by overuse.

The trade commission has sent its confidential recommendations to the White House, but the administration has yet to issue a decision.

ROY WIGLEY

Going once: Ragi Moonsamy (wearing waistcoat) during the auction of De Oudekraal Hotel yesterday. He intends making a post-auction offer to the liquidators for the hotel

R29,6-m bid for hotel may still be bettered

Oudekraal sale not yet confirmed

(56)

LLEWELLYN JONES
BUSINESS REPORTER

ARG 26/3/98

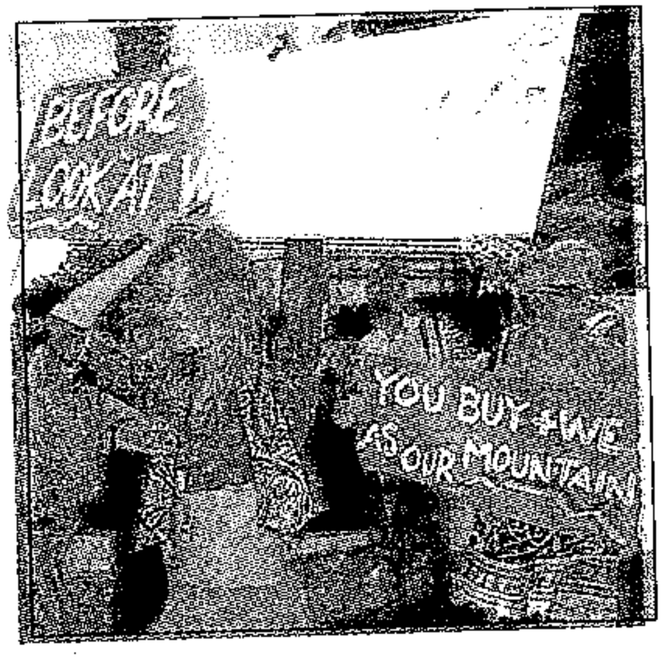
The sale of De Oudekraal Hotel to anonymous buyers may not be the last word on the future of the controversy-dogged development.

The buyers refused to identify themselves at yesterday's auction until the sale was confirmed by the liquidators today, but are rumoured to be a consortium of Pretoria businessmen who own a hotel in Gauteng.

Meanwhile, they might not get what they offered R29,5-million for. At least one bidder, Ragi Moonsamy of Cape Town property developers Bexprop, says he will make a better offer to liquidator Stephen Gore.

Mr Moonsamy, or anybody else, has until 5pm today to make a better offer.

The top bidders at the auctionthen have the opportunity to match the bid or back down.



Protest: environmentalists at the auction

Mr Moonsamy was an early bidder, but withdrew about the R24-million mark when it became clear that Standard Corporate and Merchant Bank was taking an active part.

The bank is the largest creditor of the original developer, Hottentots Huisie, which is now in liquidation. The bank was an aggressive bidder, pushing the price as high as possible to recoup the R33-million it is owed by Hottentots Huisie.

Myles Ruck, deputy managing director of bank, said he would be "delighted" if the R29,5 million offer was beaten.

Not so delighted at the price was Jeff Turner, managing director of Murray & Roberts Cape, the building contractor involved jointly with Grinaker Construction.

"They got a bargain. It's worth a lot more than that," he said.

Murray & Roberts and Grinaker are owed R5,6-million, but are unlikely to see any of it as the bank, as a preferred creditor, has to be paid first.

Community granted a portion of Kruger Park

(56)

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

ARG 26/3/98

Pretoria – The community of Makuleke in the Northern Province, which has been granted a portion of the Kruger National Park in a historic land-claims settlement, said it is planning to develop a tourist camp in the area.

The terms of the agreement, announced by South African National Parks (SANP) in Pretoria, state that the community will not be able to live permanently on the property, nor farm or mine on it unless given permission by the SANP.

They are, however, allowed to look into the possibility of erecting small, light impact tent accommodation aimed at the luxury market, as well as wilderness trails and a cultural route – including a traditional museum.

The agreement, reached after 18 months of negotiations, allows the community to gain control of about 25 000 hectares of ancestral land which they lost through forceful removals in 1968.

The agreement will also allow for 5 000 hectares of the Madimbo Corridor, controlled by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the Northern Province, which falls outside of the Kruger Park to now be included under the conservation management of the park.

Makuleke community spokesman Livingstone Makuleke said their projects were in the planning stages but already young members of the community were being registered for business management and nature conservation courses to help with the development of the area.

Although the SANP will initially manage the area at its own cost, the agreement stipulates that the community will share the costs once income is generated from tourist activities.

The agreement will be officially signed by the community, the SANP, the Northern Province and the SANDF next month before it is presented to the Land Claims Court and later to Parliament for consideration.

ANTI-DEVELOPMENT: Demonstrators gathered outside the Peninsula All-Suite Hotel in Sea Point yesterday to protest against the auctioning of De Oudekraal Hotel, the controversial property development on the slopes of the Twelve Apostles. *PICTURE: GARTH STEAD*

Oudekraal Hotel snapped up for R29,5m

(56) CT 26/3/98

DAN SIMON

IT took some coaxing to elicit an opening bid out of the group of 150 or so people who assembled yesterday in the Peninsula All-Suite Hotel's society room for the auction of De Oudekraal Hotel.

Once the offer of R15 million was made, it was a matter of minutes before the controversial development, on the slopes of the Twelve Apostles, was sold to an undisclosed buyer for the "fairly acceptable price" of R29,5 million.

After going through the motions of detailing the conditions of sale — one of which was that the buyer would not have to pay commission — auctioneer Mr Jonathon Smiedt, of Claremart Auctioneers, launched into Africa's biggest hotel auction — a brisk affair enjoyed silently by a spellbound audience which cast its eyes from bidder to bidder.

Even an anti-Oudekraal Hotel demonstration by a group of 24 people at the entrance to the Peninsula failed to cause a distraction. This was a social event and there was the scent of big money in the air.

After a two way tussle — in increments of R500 000 — between a representative of Standard Corporate and Merchant Bank and an unknown bidder, a third bidder suddenly entered the contest and offered R28 million.

He dropped out almost immediately and so did the bank when the price reached R29,5 m.

The property was placed into final liquidation earlier this year after developer Mr Steve Jones, of Hottentots Huisie, failed to meet certain financial obligations with Standard Corporate and Merchant.

Standard Corporate and Merchant, as the main creditor, is owed R33m on the incomplete development. It has until 5pm today to confirm the sale.

All that could be established about the buyer was that it was a company "involved in the hotel business in Gauteng".

"This is to add to their stable," said Smiedt, who added that the hotel would open its doors as a five-star establishment as was originally intended.

An audit of the development has noted that R40m has been spent on it so far and that a further R8m will have to be spent by the new owner to complete the five-star establishment.

The development's rooms and suites and the underground parking are near completion.

WS

Oudekraal hotel auctioned off for R29,5m

CT (BR) 26/3/98 (56)

THABO LESHILO
BUSINESS EDITOR

Cape Town — The controversial Hotel de Oudekraal development was sold to a secret buyer for R29,5 million yesterday, to the beat of protesting environmentalists' drumming and despite a threat to blow it up.

Business Report has learnt that the mysterious bidder represented Pro Equity, a Pretoria-based company which owns Court Classique, a hotel in Arcadia, Pretoria, in partnership with Gerolemou P Construction.

Before the auction, police searched the incomplete luxury hotel on the slopes of Table Mountain for a bomb after an anonymous tip-off. However the search was unsuccessful.

The development, which cost R40 million, was liquidated in January because the developer, Steve Jones of Hottentots Huisie Investments, could not meet loan finance obligations to Standard Corporate and Merchant Bank (SCMB).

Jones owed the bank R33 million and Murray & Roberts and Grinaker, the two main builders, R5,6 million. Another R8 million would have to be spent to finish the hotel to five-star standards initially envisaged.

A group of environmentalists — at least one of them half-clad — beat a congo drum and sang and danced outside the hotel. The protesters wanted to keep the area pristine.

Prospective buyers, contractors, a small media contingent and other interested parties crammed into the 140-seat function room where the auction was held. Many had to leave because they could not even get anywhere near the door.

"Why leave, your money is as good as anyone else's," one man shouted at another in a bid to persuade him to stay on.

Inside the auction room, the auctioneer explained the conditions of sale to those present. "There is no buyer's commission. The price you bid is the price you pay," Smiedt told his audience with delight.

The man from Pro Equity survived the eventual contest between four bidders and was declared the buyer at R29,5 million.

MYSTERY MAN *The successful bidder (seated, right) for Hotel de Oudekraal converses with a colleague after the sale*

PHOTO: ANDREW BROWN

Winds of change make call of the wild accessible to all SA's people

(56) Star 26/3/98

Kruger's transformation is far from from over but steps are in place to make it happen

By Melanie-Ann Fehs
Environment Reporter

On the eve of its centenary the Kruger National Park, which owes its existence and name to the vision of Transvaal president Paul Kruger, is making a concerted effort to reach out to all South Africans.

In an effort to dispel the long-held view that the Kruger is a playground for wealthy whites and foreign tourists, black South Africans and women will be considered for management positions as the administrators of the Kruger strive to create a peoples' park.

SA National Parks chief executive Mavuso Msimang, said much more work is needed to instil a sense of pride and understanding on the importance of national parks among black South Africans. For years the park's administrative and management staff have been white, while black staff worked mainly as domestic and maintenance workers.

Now, however, both the director and one of his deputies are black. "We have to go all out to market the park to blacks," he said.

Msimang believes that the first step in this direction is to place more people of colour in senior administrative positions at the park. This would help "make it easier to get the support from the greater population".

In the spirit of the theme for the centenary celebrations – Shamena Shawena which means It's Mine, and It's Yours Too – Msimang hopes that within the next few years Kruger Park will become a people's park.

The park has come a long way since Kruger fought tooth and nail to establish a protected area for rapidly disappearing game. He championed the policy recommending the setting aside of special areas of protection. But despite good intentions, Kruger's efforts fell on deaf ears and it was only in 1889 when a motion was introduced in the Volksraad that two areas were set aside as game reserves.

Although the motion was accepted in principle, no immediate steps were taken to implement it.

In 1895 the question of a game reserve was again raised and eventually adopted by the Volksraad with only two dissenting votes.

On March 26 1898 a proclamation was published in the Government Gazette stipulating that the destruction, hunting or wounding of game in the proclaimed area was strictly prohibited. This marked the birth of the Sabie Game Reserve.

But it was only after many setbacks, including the Anglo-Boer War and continued hunting in the area that a National Parks Act was eventually adopted in May 1926.

The act provided for the appointment of a National Parks Board of Trustees for the preservation of the fauna and flora in the proclaimed park and the provision for facilities for visitors to the area. A proposal that the Sabie Game Reserve be renamed the Kruger National Park was also accepted.

Almost immediately after the appointment of the board they set to work preparing for the opening of the park to visitors, by building bridges, roads and rest camps.

When the first visitors arrived at the park in 1927, they had to be content with very few facilities. According to Irene Grobler, from the James Hamilton Library at Skukuza, the first mud huts were only built in 1929. When the park opened in 1927, there were very few roads. "They were not geared for tourists, everything was very primitive, the tourists had to cater for themselves," Grobler said.

From these humble beginnings the Kruger has become one of Africa's most popular tourist destinations. It has won international acclaim and attracted heads of states, such names as Prime Minister of Denmark, Poul Nyrup-Rasmussen, and Dr Helmut Khol, chancellor of Germany, among many other celebrities.

Tourism started with just three vehicles entering the park when it first opened and has grown to just under one million visitors last year.

The park, stretching over two million hectares, is home to 8 300 elephants, 2 000 lions, 19 500 buffalo and 2 220 rhinoceros. It has 24 camps, 12 filling stations, restaurants, shops, a post office and a road network of more than 2 400 kilometres.

Kruger Park and its staff have weathered many storms including severe drought, veld fires and poaching.

The park has also come under sharp criticism for poor staff attitudes and bad service, and its elephant culling and contraceptive programmes.

But as we head towards the millennium, Kruger is also making a concerted effort to reach out to the surrounding communities who for years have been dependent on park land for their survival.

Park officials hope that through the privatisation or outsourcing of some of their services, communities can become involved in the running of the park.

Another change in mindset has been shown by the return of 25 000 hectares of land to the Makuleke community who were forcefully removed from their ancestral land in 1968.

The Kruger's transformation is far from over, but efforts at ensuring all South Africans now have access to national assets, once the domain of only the rich and famous, are fast becoming a reality.

ETIENNE ROTHBART

Rest time ... a lion takes some time out from the heat at the Kruger National Park.

Mpumalanga ANC grills Mkhwanazi on walkout

NELSPRUIT — The African National Congress (ANC) caucus in Mpumalanga's legislature grilled environmental affairs MEC David Mkhwanazi yesterday for storming out of a portfolio committee session on Wednesday night.

Mkhwanazi led the walkout by his departmental delegation in Nelspruit after refusing to be cross-examined about his motives for attempting to dilute the autonomy of the Mpumalanga Parks Board through a series of amendments to its enabling act.

Accusing the committee of irregularly allowing parks board directors to question his political and personal motives for demanding direct control of the the board's budget, Mkhwanazi said he was no longer prepared to defend the amendments publicly.

African Eye News Service reported that Mkhwanazi proposed that his department make a separate presentation on the planned changes without the presence of the board.

Mkhwanazi ignored committee chairman Mamazane Matzimela's requests that he answer the board's questions. He is accountable to the committee as an MEC and directly defied the legislature by walking out.

ANC provincial chief whip Fish Mahlalela confirmed yesterday morning that the full ANC legislative caucus was questioning Mkhwanazi on his actions and that the party viewed the incident as very serious.

Wednesday's impasse started when Mkhwanazi dodged questions about the intent of amendments aimed at limiting the service period of the board's CE, management policy, financial control and the future of the board's mandate to achieve self-sufficiency through commercialisation.

He was also unable to answer questions on the effects of proposed changes to the multibillion rand, 25-year Dolphin deal, which he renegotiated with the Dubai-based Dolphin group last year. The deal gives Dolphin the right to commercialise a number of Mpumalanga parks in return for financial support. — Sapa.

(56)

BD 27/3/98

Land deal for Peninsula park gets thumbs-up

(56) ARG 27/3/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

A key committee of the City of Cape Town has given the nod to the transfer of the municipality's conservation land to the new Cape Peninsula National Park.

In what must rank as one of the shortest meetings in council history, the economic development and property committee yesterday dismissed the single objection, from the Rondebosch and Rosebank Ratepayers' & Business Association, to the proposed handover of the land.

The association's main objection was the length of the proposed 99-year lease to SA National Parks (formerly the National Parks Board). They said it was "unreasonably long in the circumstances".

The committee approved a report by Marius Coetzee, head of the council's parks and bathing amenities services, who pointed out that all three affected local authorities – Cape Town, the Cape Metropolitan Council and South Peninsula – had agreed in principle to transfer the conservation land to the board.

He said the lease agreement was only an interim safety mechanism until the negotiated conditions for the transfer had been met.

The six committee members present confirmed to chairman Hanief Tiseker that they had read Mr Coetzee's report and agreed with his recommendation.

The committee's decision will go to the full council meeting next week.

If ratified as expected, the council will be able to meet – although only just – the agreed April 1 transfer date of the land to SA National Parks.

Pretoria firm wins Oudekraal hotel

ProEquity promises 'utmost sensitivity' to site

ARG 27/3/98 (56)

LLEWELLYN JONES
BUSINESS REPORTER

The sale of the incomplete De Oudekraal Hotel to a Pretoria company has been confirmed, in spite of a higher offer by a Cape property development company.

Pro Equity, an asset management company from Pretoria, won the bidding contest at an auction on Wednesday with an offer of R29,5-million, but later bettered it to R30-million and the sale was confirmed, said auctioneer Jonathan Smiedt.

Nick Gorbishley, the director of Standard Corporate and Merchant Bank's property division, did not believe an offer from Bexprop in Cape Town was better.

"It depends on how you look at it. The post-auction offer from Bexprop was not straightforward," he said.

The bank is the largest creditor of the original developer, Hottentots Huisie, which is in liquidation. The bank was an aggressive bidder at the auction, pushing the price as high as possible in an attempt to recoup the R33-million it is owed.

"At the end of the day, we were a bit disappointed with the outcome of the auction," Mr Gorbishley said.

"None of the foreigners who had expressed an interest in the site lifted their bidding cards at all."

Pro Equity managing director Jan Louw said the company would complete the hotel with the "utmost sensitivity" in view of objections by environmentalists to its position on the mountainside at Oudekraal.

Pro Equity already owns a hotel, the Court Classique in Arcadia, Pretoria, in partnership with Gerolemou P Construction.

"It is not our intention to downscale the development in any way," Mr Louw said. He expected the hotel to open soon.

Kruger Park: 'remember the landless'

Sowetan 27/3/98

By Victor Mecoamere

THE Centenary celebration of the Kruger National Park (KNP) should not occur without remembering those who had to surrender their land for the creation of the park, President Nelson Mandela said yesterday.

"In commemorating this day we need not forget those who had to surrender their land to make it possible, often through forcible removal, nor those who for generations were denied access to their heritage except as poorly paid labourers," Mandela said in Skukuza, Mpumalanga.

He was speaking just a few hours before he was to fly to Cape Town to welcome United States president Bill Clinton.

Mandela was accompanied to Skukuza by the late Mozambican president Samora Machel's widow, Mrs Graca Machel.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan, and premiers Mathews Phosa of Mpumalanga and Ngoako Ramatlhodi of Northern Province were among the dignitaries.

The KNP, the flagship of the South African National Parks, was established in 1898 by the late Paul Kruger, president of the then Zud–Afrikaanche Republiek.

Blacks who lived on the land which is now the KNP – between Northern Province and Mpumalanga up to the borders of South Africa with Mozambique and Zimbabwe – had to make way for the establishment of the park.

"We recall these threads in our history not to decry the foresight of those who established the park, nor to diminish our enjoyment of it," said Mandela. "We do so rather to re-affirm our commitment that the rural communities in and around our parks should also benefit from our natural heritage, and find in it an opportunity for their development."

Mandela said rural communities could become active agents in meaningful programmes of conservation and environmental community education. In so doing they would contribute to the sustainable use of the environment and at the same time dispel the myth that tourism is the preserve of the rich.

A video to mark and promote the centenary and the park's huge tourism potential went on sale yesterday. Its production was sponsored by the giant steel and iron manufacturing company Iscor.

ECOTOURISM

BOE's big bucks buy the boma

(56)

Former owners back to boardrooms FM 27/3/98

Mpumalanga's Thornybush Game Lodge, co-owned and operated by leisure property developer Trevor Jordan and his wife, Jeanette, has been sold to a consortium in which the Board of Executors (BOE) has a large share.

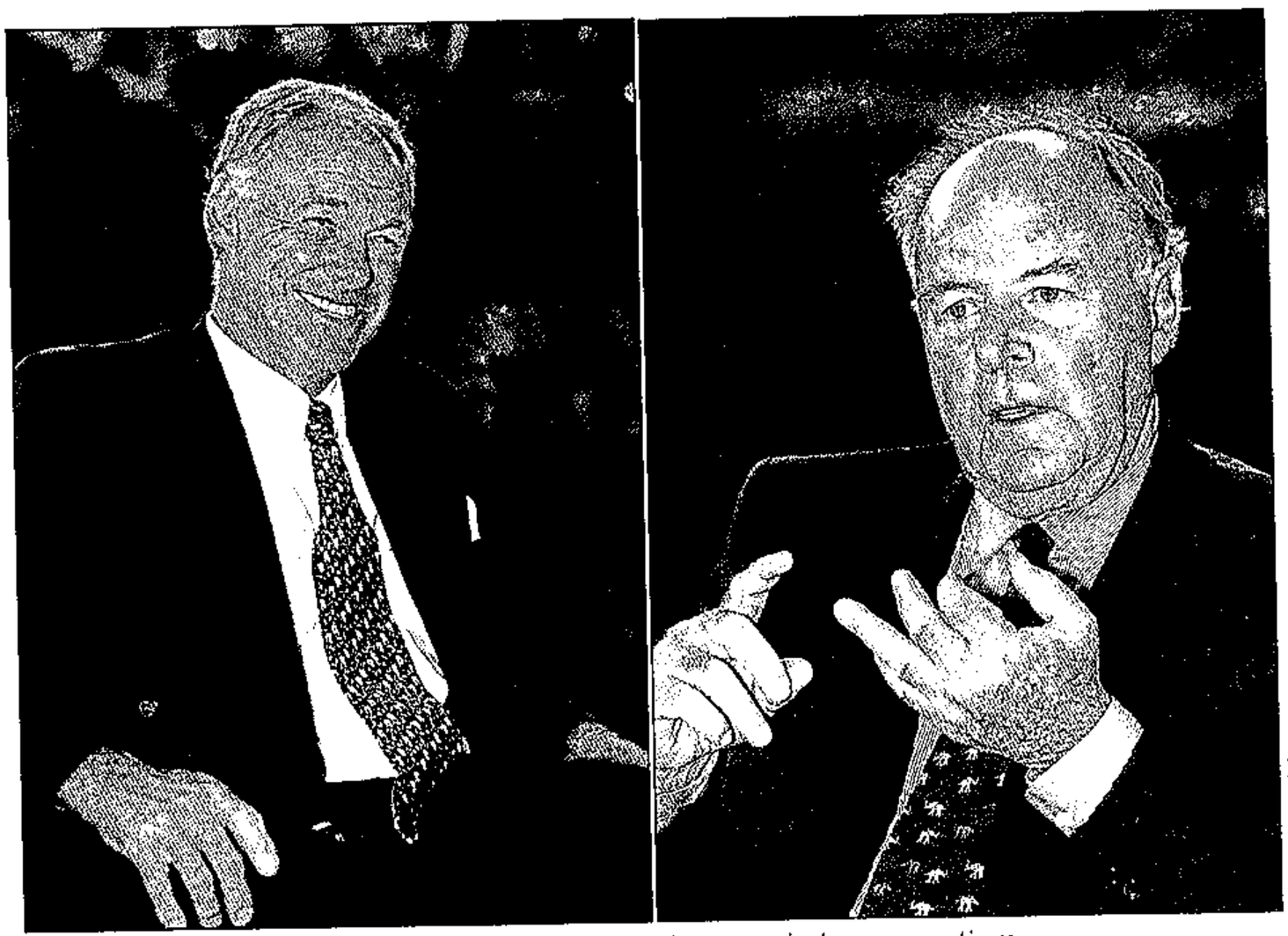
The deal brewed for two years, complicated by the fact that Jordan's sleeping partners in the development are a high-profile and controversial crew who are not exactly in need of the money.

They are Rand Merchant Bank Holdings chairman G T Ferreira, a key player in the recent giant banking and insurance merger between First National Bank, Southern Life and Momentum; RMB CEO Paul Harris; Grant Thomas, the former executive chairman of Malbak who quit under a cloud in mid-1996 but was later cleared of charges of insider trading; and Miles Lappeman, whose family owns Lappeman Diamond Cutting Works.

Though Jordan's share has also been purchased, it is likely he will continue to run Thornybush with consortium leader Alan Payne, as well as buy back in to the resort.

Payne, a former financial services industry executive (Metboard, Sage Trust, BOE), operates another BOE-backed game lodge — mountainous, 60-bed Bongani, which lies south of the Kruger Park between Nelspruit and Malelane.

"It is nearly 10 years since we bought Thornybush," says Jordan, who ran the property division of Ferreira's Rand Consolidated Investments before it merged with Johann Rupert's Rand Bank to become RMB. "It has come of age in that it has



Robert Tshabalala

***Trevor Jordan and Alan Payne** . . . joining forces in game lodge consortium*

fabulous game viewing and it needs to move to another stage of development. I had to do a deal that makes sense for Thornybush as a product, and to find new partners with vision and an understanding of the growing ecotourism industry and who could add value."

Ferreira is succinct: "Most of us bought in to Thornybush for pleasure and it's useless to try to mix business with pleasure."

Thornybush Game Reserve is 9 000 ha in extent and lies 35 km west of the Kruger National Park, adjoining General Foods chairman Johann Roode's Kapama Game Reserve. Payne's consortium, named Inzalo (Zulu for return on investment) Investment Holdings, has bought the main lodge and about 800 ha of land. However, it has traverse rights over most of the reserve, which also contains private lodges owned by SA Druggists, Kohler, Engen and Kenochem but managed by Thornybush. Commercial lodges Chapungu and Jackalberry are also part of the Thornybush range.

The Inzalo consortium is embarking on a R5m-R6m programme to upgrade Thornybush Game Lodge, a three- to four-star operation successful in the conference and package tour markets. It will be rebuilt along the Monwana River bank and pitched to the five-star market of free and independent travellers, most of whom are foreign. Payne confirms that negotiations with an international tour operator are at an advanced stage.

"Thornybush has five-star game viewing," he says. "We believe the *inzalo* lies in matching this with a five-star market."

Linda Stafford

LAND CLAIM

Perfect solution to ending a painful past

FM 27/3/98 (56)

Makuleke community compromises with Kruger Park

The cause of conservation in southern Africa has been revitalised by a precedent-setting land deal between the Makuleke community and the Kruger National Park.

A land claim that could have taken away an important part of the Kruger has been resolved to the benefit of the Makuleke, evicted from the area in 1969, as well as SA's most important national park.

Under the deal the land will be transferred back to the Makuleke. However, instead of reoccupying the land, they have agreed to turn it into a contractual national park in the belief that greater returns can be made from ecotourism than from mining or farming.

The deal has enormous implications for conservation and ecotourism in regions bordering national parks.

It could also be the key to the successful expansion of the Kruger into a transfrontier national park with Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

The agreement leaves the land under the conservation management of the Kruger but grants exclusive research and tourism development rights to the Makuleke community.

The land consists of 19 000 ha forming the northern tip of the Kruger around Pafuri and fronting the borders with Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The settlement also means that another 4 000 ha of land in the adjacent Madimbo corridor will be brought into the Kruger.

Some members of the Makuleke community live in adjacent areas of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, to which they scattered after their eviction. The majority were relocated to homelands on the Kruger border.

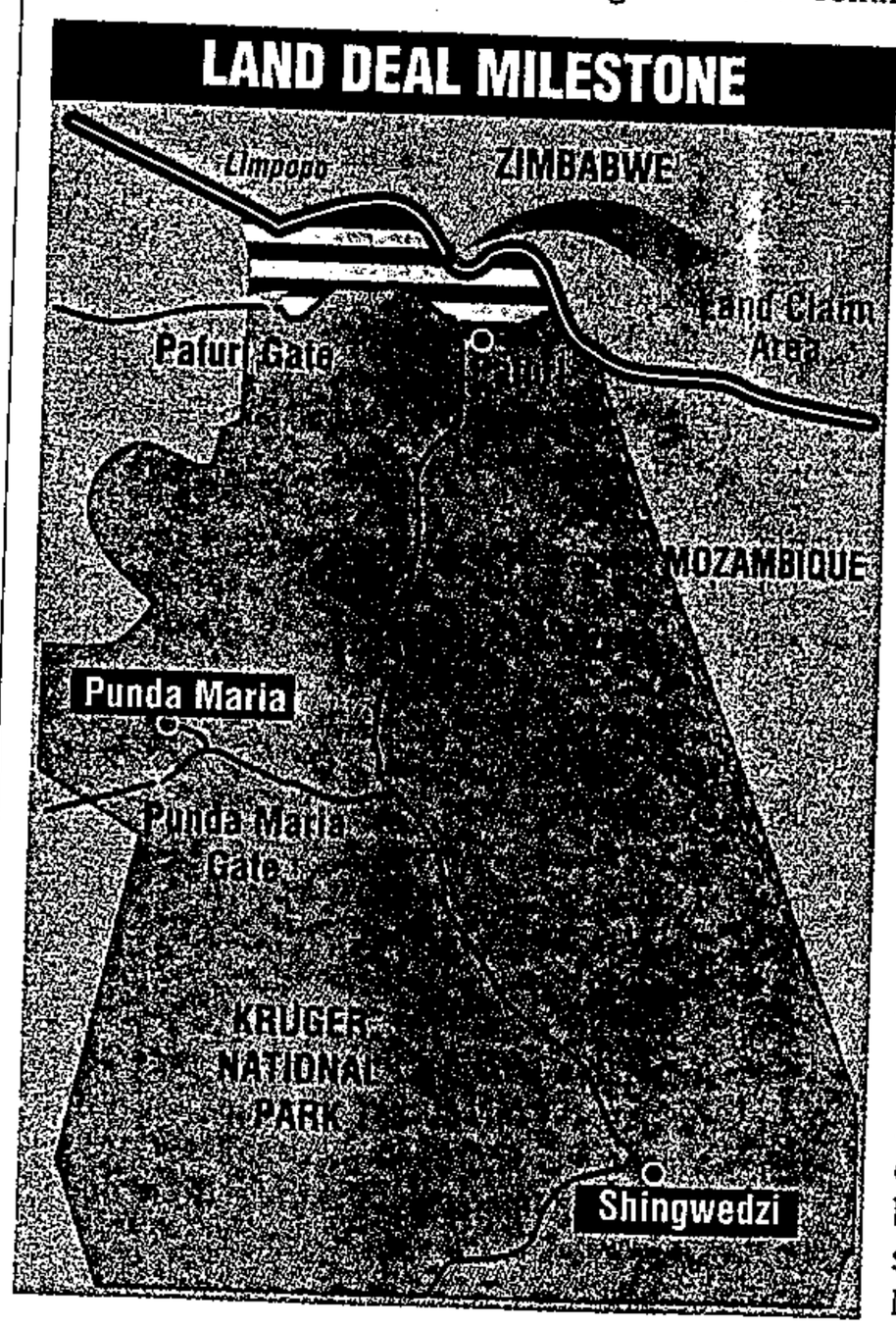
"We think this is a good agreement and the Pafuri area is strategically well positioned for the transfrontier park project," says SA National Parks (SANP) CEO Mavuso Msimang.

The expansion of the Kruger into a transfrontier park was first mooted more than four years ago, but so far progress has been limited. The Makuleke agreement and the strategic position of the community could help move the initiative forward.

The Makuleke were helped in their land claim by various advisers, including historians Jane Carruthers and Eddie Koch, who formed a community-dedicated non-governmental organisation (NGO) called the Friends of the Makuleke (FOM).

Anthropologist Conrad Steenkamp was appointed to assist in dealings between FOM, the Makuleke community and other organisations such as the SANP.

Under the agreement, the SANP is responsible for the day-to-day running of the area in terms of the overall Kruger Park management plan.



The Makuleke have agreed that the contractual agreement will run for 50 years and be reviewed after 25 years. No mining, farming or permanent habitation may take place on the land without the permission of the SANP, which has the right of first refusal should the Makuleke decide to sell.

In return, the Makuleke have full rights to all commercial tourism development and to all research work in what is one of the richest ecological zones of the Kruger.

Scientific institutions will pay the Makuleke to conduct research. Tourism developments will build luxury tented camps, and establish wildlife and birdwatching trails and a cultural route.

Says Steenkamp: "The necessary conservation guarantees have been provided by the Makuleke and the required tourism development guarantees by the SANP."

He adds that the Makuleke opted for conservation because they believe it will "maximise the turnover from their asset through profit sharing from game lodge ventures, job creation and the provision of goods and services to the ecotourism activities on their land."

Steenkamp says a vital aspect of the deal was that the Makuleke kept control of the process. "Elsewhere, government conservation bodies have been directly involved in community conservation development initiatives leading to a conflict of interest and, often, failure.

"Doing it this way meant that the SANP did not get involved in complex village politics."

A conservation NGO, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), became involved at a crucial stage in 1997 when the Makuleke needed funding and proof that there would be short-term material benefits from their course of action.

The EWT is part-funding a training facility for 22 Makuleke students studying through Technikon SA for national diplomas in nature conservation or business studies. The Gold Fields Foundation has provided a training centre for the students.

"Training is the core project on which all future development projects can be based," says Steenkamp.

"In providing this support the EWT was prepared to take the risk of offending not only its own membership but also the SANP by being seen to align itself with the Makuleke in their land claim against a national park."

The Makuleke/Kruger agreement sets a precedent for other land claims involving conservation areas. It also sets new parameters for situations where national parks or game reserves would like to expand by taking in underutilised ground on their boundaries.

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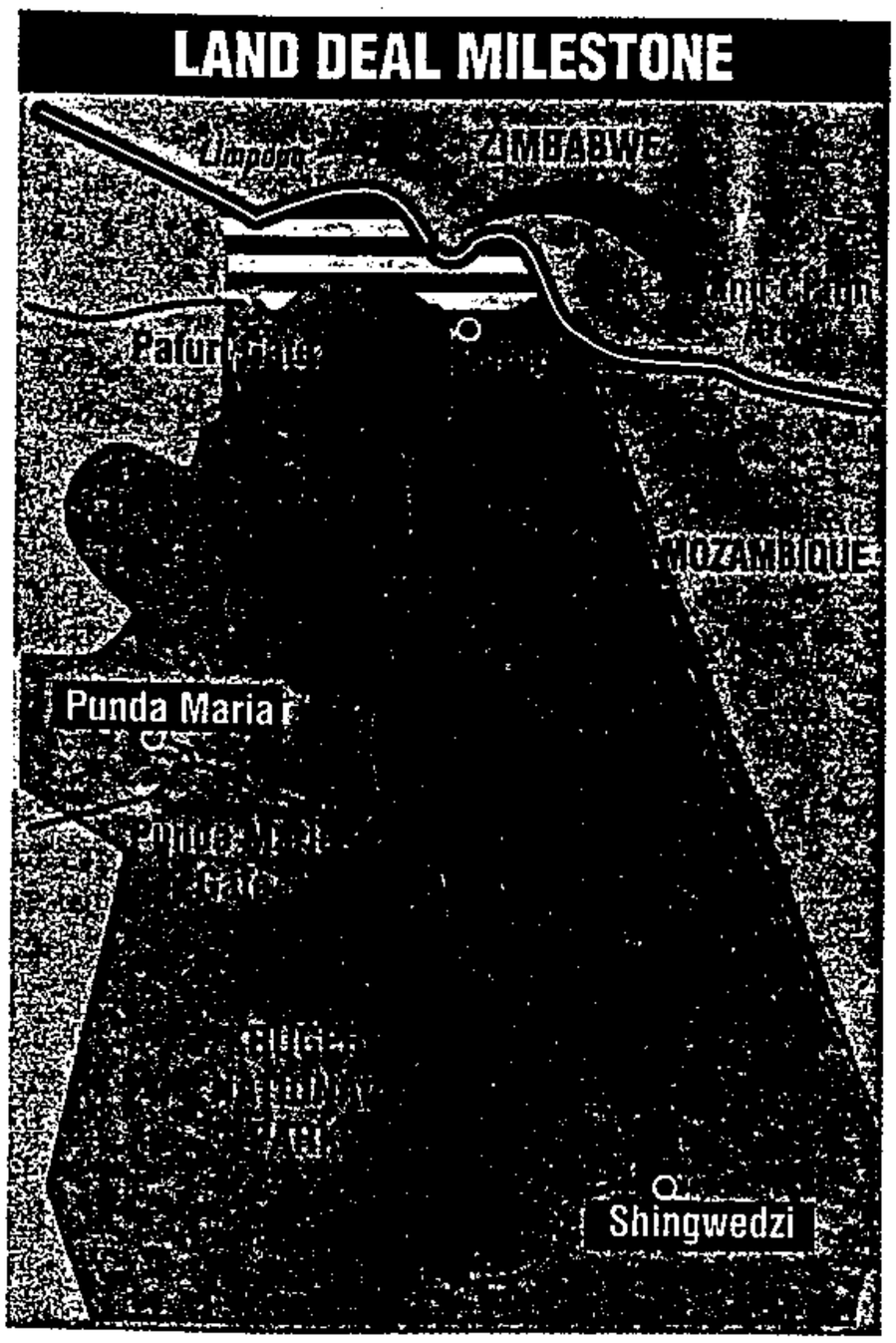

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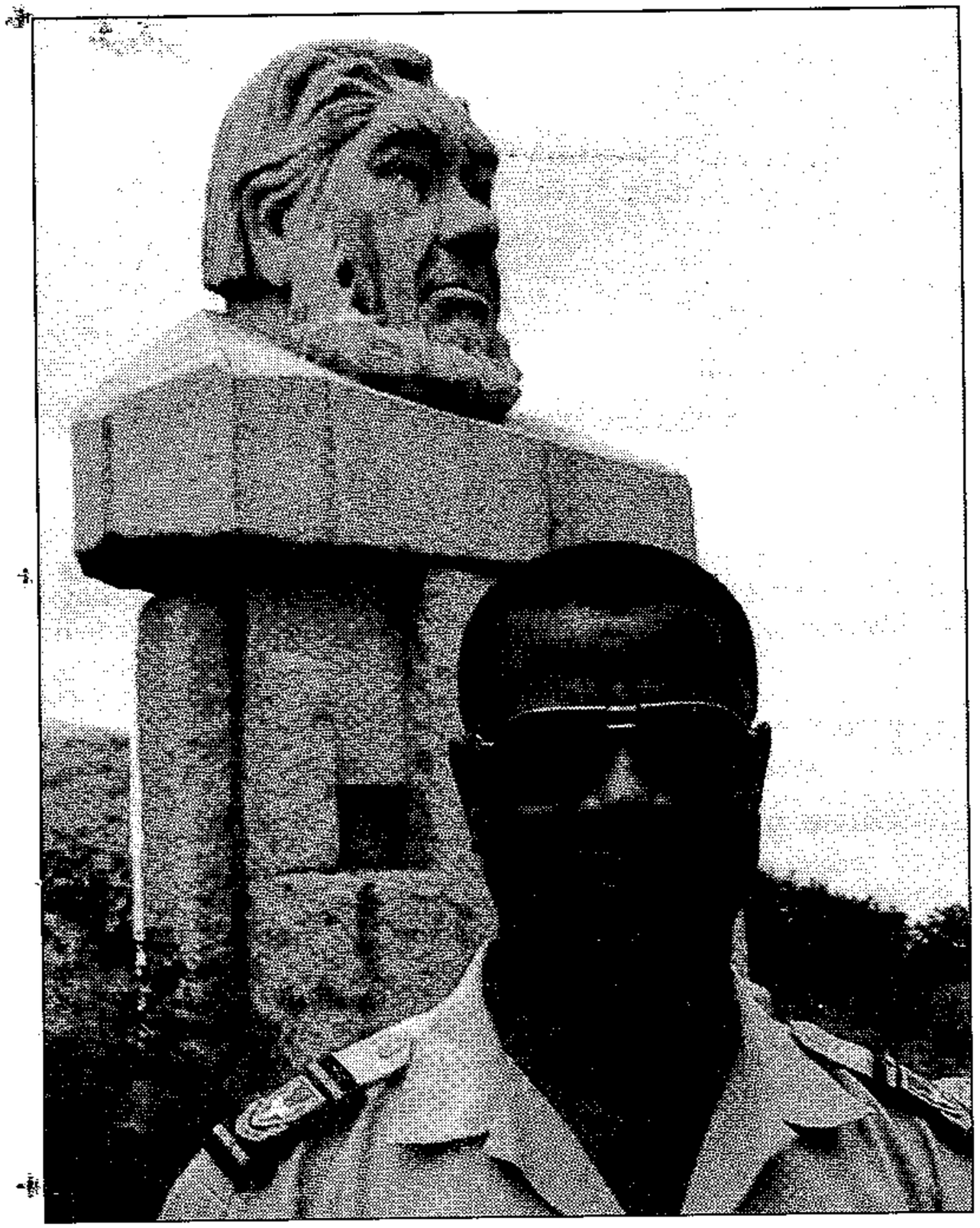


Soldiers of hope: David Mabunda below a bust of Paul Kruger, founder of the Kruger National Park

New directions at the Kruger Park

M+G 27/2-3/5/98 (56)

Sharon Hammond

It took 100 years, but the Kruger National Park finally has a black man at the helm. David Mabunda, the park's new director, sees himself as a "soldier of hope", much in the mould of its founder, Paul Kruger.

Mabunda is not one to trash the Voortrekker leader after whom the park was named in 1898. Instead, he describes Kruger as a freedom fighter of his time. "We need more soldiers like him, across the rainbow nation, who bring about change. I'd also like to bring about change, although it will be a struggle," he says.

Mabunda believes he got the job as the Kruger's first black director in its centenary year because he has strong managerial skills. "The previous leaders were conservationists and scientists who had a love of their profession and marvelled at the wonders of nature. They were not businessmen in the true sense.

"The Kruger is big business, and it needs management in line with the new, non-discriminatory corporate image of the South African National Parks."

In his first month in office he has made his plans for the park clear without managing to offend any sensibilities. "I come from a culture of openness and consultative leadership," he explains. "You need proper consultation at grassroots level — that's my kind of language. I'm not a dictator.

Born in 1958 on a farm just outside Nelspruit, Mabunda is a former KaNgwane school inspector and, more recently, the former regional director of land affairs in Mpumalanga.

Concerns have been expressed about the fact that he does not have any formal environmental background. He has a masters degree in education management from the University of Manchester and an honours degree in labour history from Vista.

He insists, however, that he's been intensely conscious of the importance of conservation for the past 23 years. "I owe my position today to a woman who came to the college where I was studying teaching, and for two years made us write poetry and dramas about the environment."

The woman in question is Dr Sue Hart, currently director of the environmental education NGO Ecolink, who used to take students from KaNgwane to her farm in White River and "indoctrinate" them in the ways of the wild. "My philosophy of loving, cherishing and protecting the environment is owed to her. I may be new to the park, but I'm certainly not new to conservation," he says.

Mabunda has had extensive experience with land claims in protected areas, which will prove an important asset for the Kruger as it faces claims in the Pafuri area.

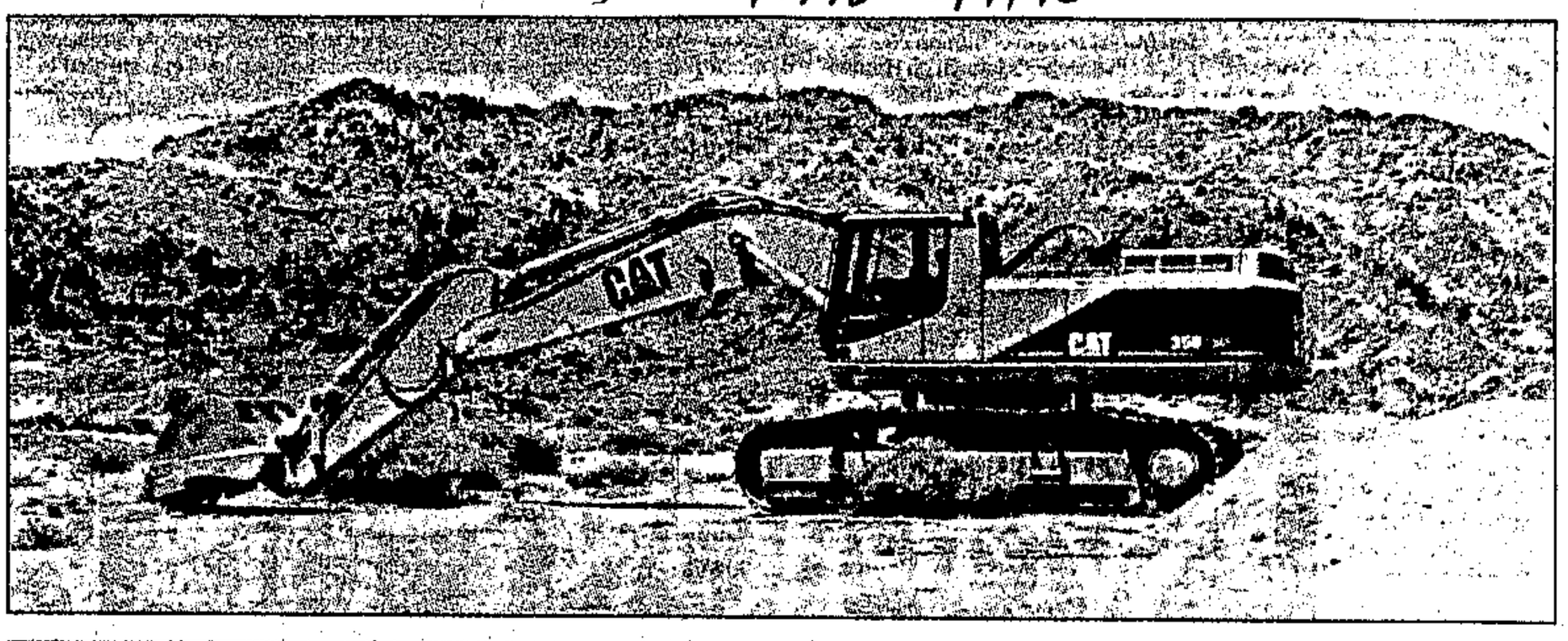
One of his first missions is to improve the living standards in the compound at Skukuza where most black staff still live, and consequently improve customer care with the support of a happier workforce.

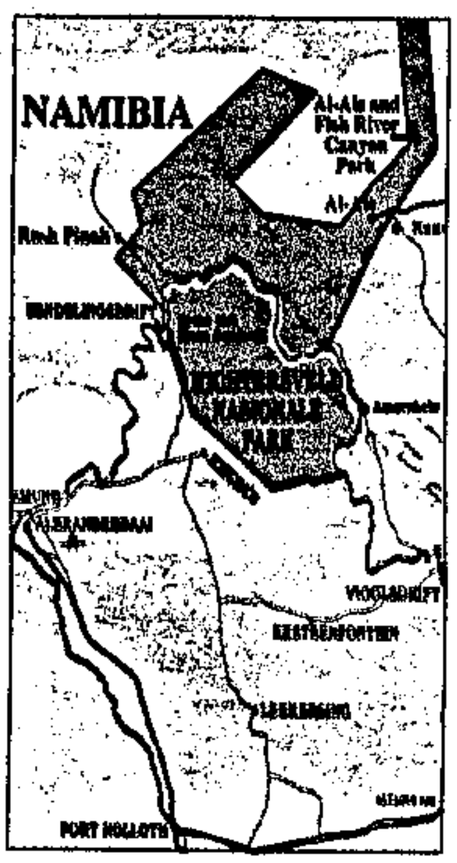
He points out that there are no women in senior managerial positions in the Kruger, and there is only one black general manager. "We need women. We shouldn't be afraid of them because they can bring in radical thinking that can only benefit policy and change."

Although most of his ideas for reform have been accepted, particularly by younger staff and trade unionists, Mabunda still expects some resistance. "There are progressive-minded individuals among the people of the park who are open to change, but I'm not so naive to think all is well. There might be a strong undercurrent which will sweep my feet away if they are not well grounded." — African Eye News Service

Rape of the Richtersveld

Miners linked to Anton Rupert are mining diamonds in a national park, reports **Fiona Macleod**





Moonscaping in the park: Huge machines remove the sand down to bedrock, where the alluvial diamonds are found (top). At the end of the world: Park warden Paddy Gordon (above) is not allowed into mining areas. PHOTOGRAPHS: FIONA MACLEOD

Diamonds are being mined in a national park in the Northern Cape by a company in which Anton Rupert's Rembrandt Group holds a 50% share. Rupert is head of both the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Peace Parks Foundation, and he helped establish the South African National Parks Trust.

The mining in the Richtersveld National Park, on the Northern Cape's border with Namibia, threatens the sanctity of the park and may set back plans to establish a transfrontier conservation park there.

Public outcry over plans to mine the Kruger National Park in the 1960s and the St Lucia wetlands in the early 1990s put paid to those plans, but the Richtersveld is so remote and the mining arrangement so unique that it is unlikely a similar campaign will be mounted.

The Richtersveld National Park, established in August 1991, has been hailed as a model of community conservation in keeping with the spirit and realities of the new South Africa.

It was founded on a contract which entitles local communities to graze their livestock in the park, and to continue traditional practices such as collecting firewood and wild honey. The land remains the property of the Richtersveld community and the parks trust rents it from them; the park is run by a management committee comprising four national parks members and five community representatives; and community members have been employed at the park and to help set up tourism infrastructure.

Covering 162 445ha, the park is South Africa's third-largest national park, after Kruger and the Kalahari Gemsbok. Among the reasons it was declared a national park is its incredible variety of unique plants, including the greatest concentration of succulents in the world. It also has archaeological sites and rock art dating back thousands of years.

The park was at the top of a list submitted by Northern Cape authorities this month for recognition as a World Heritage Site. The national selection team placed it among the top six, and it will be resubmitted for consideration next year.

A unique feature of the Richtersveld park, and one that perhaps counted against it in the World Heritage Site selection process, is that mining is allowed inside it. In terms of the original agreement, drawn up when Dawie de Villiers was minister of mineral and energy affairs (he later went on to become minister of environmental affairs), mining can continue there indefinitely as long as minerals are being found.

According to the park's warden, Paddy Gordon, the understanding at the time was that mining was being scaled down and would probably come to an end in about 1996.

"When I came here in mid-1994, the closing of the mine was being discussed by the manager. But then they discovered some rich diamond deposits and mining has been expanding." Gordon is not allowed into the mining areas in the park.

The Rembrandt Group owns 50% of Trans Hex, one of South Africa's two largest producers of diamonds; the other owners are private shareholders. Rembrandt representative Hans Knutze says the company does not manage Trans Hex, although it "has had an interest in the mining company for many years".

The Reuning mine Trans Hex is operating in the Richtersveld park is one of three it owns in the Northern Cape. Its headquarters are at the entrance to the park and it is mining some 6 000ha there. Two smaller operators have also been granted concessions further into the park.

As you drive into the park, the destruction is immediately apparent: huge trenches the size of battleships; huge mounds of sand with little or no vegetation; huge boulders dumped on the sides of the roads; and huge earth-moving vehicles, whose drivers appear to have little compunction about leaving their tracks all over the fragile sandveld, which can take hundreds of years to grow.

The law now requires miners to rehabilitate dumps made since 1980. This means the trenches are sometimes filled in, but up to 60% of the sand taken out doesn't fit back in. The leftover mounds are usually contoured but, without topsoil, revegetation is slow. The dumps created pre-1980 are simply left to weather in a menacing moon-like landscape.

The area Trans Hex is mining is mostly close to the mighty Orange River, which forms the northern boundary with Namibia. It's where the alluvial deposits are found, but it's also where the richest archaeological sites are and where human habitation — both past and present — must occur because there is no other source of water in this semi-desert.

It's also slap-bang in the middle of the envisaged transfrontier conservation area. Rupert is chair of the Peace Parks Foundation, which is helping facilitate the joining up of the Richtersveld park with the Fish River Canyon and the Ai-Ais hot springs on the other side of the border.

John Hanks, executive director of the foundation, points out these plans are embryonic, though they have received support from both the Namibian and South African authorities. Mining on both sides of the Orange River is one of the "main challenges" they face, he says.

For years national parks has been renting offices and accommodation for staff and tourists from Trans Hex on the banks of the river. But, because of its expansions, Trans Hex took back the guest accommodation from the beginning of January — and it has given notice that it intends taking back all the staff accommodation, including the warden's home, in November.

"This is a big blow," says Gordon. "National parks ploughed about R250 000 into fixing up the guest houses. We just don't have the money for other accommodation."

Without the ability to attract more tourists, what future is there for the park? There has been talk of redefining its borders and even, at worst, of de-proclaiming it. "I'll fight this tooth and nail," says Gordon. "It's an area that deserves protection. When the mining's gone, the only source of income here will be tourism."

Altie Krige, MD of Trans Hex's diamond division, believes his company is being made a scapegoat: "National parks hasn't put any money into infrastructure like roads — we've had to do it. Now they're making us the culprit."

He confirms the mine is expanding, but won't say how profitable it is. As for the degradation, he says the mine did an environmental management plan four years ago and this was approved by the Department of Minerals and Energy.

Trans Hex is keen to point out it pays 5% of its income — about R6-million a year — into the Namaqualand Diamond Trust Fund, set up for the benefit of local communities. It also employs 400 to 500 people in the area.

In the end, it all comes down to money. National parks, with its eye on protecting the area and attracting tourists, maintains it is "planning for forever", as one parks official put it. But then there is also a saying that "diamonds are forever".

Mining industry is its own referee

Miners such as Trans Hex have been able to wreak untold damage on the environment because the mining industry is its own referee when it comes to regulating the environmental impact of mining.

Regulations gazetted by the Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism last September make it compulsory for environmental impact assessments (EIAs) to be carried out prior to a wide variety of economic activities, but not mining.

This has resulted in the bizarre situation in the Richtersveld park, for instance, where the warden has to do an EIA if he wants to build a road, but the miners can continue with their activities without assessments.

Prior to last September's regulations, EIAs were encouraged by law but were not mandatory. The minister could order an assessment at any time, especially as a result of public outcry. The reasoning was companies would do them anyway because it would be so much more expensive to halt operations in mid-stream. But the only example where this really worked in the mining industry was when a public outcry put paid to plans to mine the St Lucia wetlands.

When the EIA regulations were being drawn up, the environment department insisted they apply to mining. The Department of Minerals and Energy resisted, on the basis that it has its own environmental management programmes and the expertise to enforce them.

The Green Paper on Mining and Minerals under discussion includes a chapter on environmental management, but critics say its biggest flaw is it ignores all other legislation and policy on the environment.

Minister of Environment Affairs and Tourism Pallo Jordan says mining has been left out of the EIA regulations so "we can dot our Is and cross our Ts". He says agreement has been reached with the minister of minerals and energy that EIAs need to be institutionalised and must apply to all economic activities, including mining.

When this is likely to happen he is unable to say, because the legislative process is "bogged down by bureaucracy". In the meantime, the mining industry will continue to be both player and referee.

Big guns battle to save Rooi Els

Meiring faces court action over rezoning of reserve

ST (CM) 29/3/98 (56)

CHARL DE VILLIERS

WESTERN Cape Planning MEC Kobus Meiring faces a constitutional challenge over his approving controversial development plans for the proposed Kogelberg biosphere reserve.

His go-ahead for the rezoning and subdivision of land at Rooi Els has sparked an outcry among ratepayers and conservationists who claim Meiring has ignored "overwhelming" opposition to the development on the False Bay coast.

They have also accused the provincial planning department of riding roughshod over appeals for an environmental impact assessment in one of the Western Cape's most valuable fynbos regions.

Rallying under the banner of the Save Klein Hangklip Association, the objectors allege the authorities have flouted the Constitution by refusing them access to the documents on which Meiring based his decision.

They have instructed lawyers to seek an urgent interdict in terms of section 32 of the Bill of Rights to compel the province to release information they say is needed for the High Court to review and set aside Meiring's approval.

Their lawyer, Tom Cloete, said a provincial planning official had told him that documents could be released only under a court order.

"This is apparently an instruction in a departmental circular," Cloete said.

Planning department spokesman Pieter Coetzee said Meiring would comment once he had been briefed by his departmental head, Theo Tolmay.

Meanwhile, lawyers for Gauteng developer Christo Nel confirmed yesterday that they were considering an appeal by the objectors for the development to be suspended until the High Court had heard the application.

Nel has been granted permission to establish 13 plots on about 20 percent of 22ha of mountainside and fynbos wetland bordering Rooi Els, a holiday settlement near Pringle Bay.

Cape Nature Conservation has described the area as "critically important" for its plant life. It opposes further encroachment.

University of Cape Town botanist Jaana Ball has warned that the development will have an "irreversibly destructive impact" on plant and animal resources.

Nel's planning consultant, Coen Hanekom, said resistance to his client's development was "largely fabricated".

The land had been incorporated into the township years ago, he said. The Rooi Els local authority has been offered the rest of the land as public open space.

"The benefits of this development far outweigh its costs," Hanekom said. "I don't know what they're complaining about."

Vlei crisis team to drop salt bomb on toxic algae

People warned not to collect or eat shellfish from Kommetjie outlet

(56) ARG 30/3/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Environmentalists are hoping desperately for favourable weather and tides in the next few days to help them deal with deadly toxic blue-green algae blooms in Wildevoëlvlei near Kommetjie.

Mussels and oysters at the sea outlet of the vlei have been affected by the toxins, and people have been warned not to collect or eat any shellfish from this area as it is probably extremely poisonous.

The algae are 10 times more lethal than strychnine and only slightly less deadly than cobra venom.

A crisis team of freshwater scientists, ecologists and engineers drawn from the South Peninsula municipality, the Cape Metropolitan Council, a private consulting firm and the University of Cape Town is dealing with the problem.

The team's plans probably will come to a head on Wednesday when the vlei system will be "bombed" with salt from a helicopter in a world-first attempt at dealing with this sort of problem.

The algae, which occur naturally in small numbers in most freshwater systems, multiplied rapidly through the vlei when most of the natural pond weed was killed by an unknown pollutant in January. The algae soon reached dangerous concentrations.

University of Cape Town scientist Bryan Davies told a meeting in Fish Hoek last week that the situation was "a human health crisis".

Metropolitan council scientist Bill Harding said: "They (blue-green algae) are not silly little toxins, they're extremely dangerous."

But efforts to increase the salinity of the vlei to about 10 parts a thousand – which will kill the algae without affecting other key elements of the ecosystem such as birds, fish and vegetation like pondweed – still depend on an influx of seawater, which has a salinity of about 35 parts a thousand.

The channel from the vlei to the sea, which is normally dry at this time of the year, has been opened artificially with a mechanical digger.

Also, it has been connected with another artificial channel to the huge tidal lagoon area behind the beachfront dunes, which sometimes fills with seawater at spring high tide.

The team is hoping that the equinox spring high tides that began yesterday will crest the 2m-high beach dunes and fill the lagoon area. This seawater should begin gravity-flowing into the lower of the two vleis in the Wildevoël system when its surface level has been lowered sufficiently via the opened outflow channel.

This will help increase the overall salinity and kill the blue-green algae.

Consulting engineer John Wilkinson said: "There's a reasonable chance of getting sufficient flow, but we require a low atmospheric pressure and a north-westerly wind to lift the seawater over the 2m dunes."

Plans include dumping 300 tons of salt into the Wildevoëlvlei, most from a helicopter, and the rest via the sewer and an irrigation system.

The salt has cost nearly R60 000, and much of the rest of the R400 000 budget for the clean-up (R300 000 from the metropolitan council and the balance from South Peninsula) will be spent on chartering the helicopter.

Kruger park gets its first black director

BD 30/3/98 (56)

SKUKUZA — It took 100 years, but the Kruger National Park finally has a black man at the helm.

Former Kangwane school inspector and Mpumalanga director of land affairs, David Mabunda, 40, has been appointed to take the park into the 21st century.

He has big changes in mind for the park. "I come from a culture of openness and consultative leadership," he said.

At the centenary celebrations in Skukuza this past week, concern was expressed from certain quarters that Mabunda — who has a masters degree in education management from the University of Manchester and an honours degree in labour history from Vista University — did not have a formal environmental background.

Mabunda, however, said he had been intensely conscious of the importance of conservation for the past 23 years. He also had experience with land claims in protected areas, which would prove an important asset for a park which faced claims in the Pafuri area.

Understanding the importance of land to people, combined with the need for environmental conservation, was what spurred him to apply for the post of director of the Kruger National Park, he said.

He believed he had strong managerial skills lacking in previous heads of the park, who were "conservationists and scientists who had a love of their profession and marvelled at the wonders of nature (but) were not businessmen in the true sense".

"The Kruger National Park is a big business which needs management in line with the new, nondiscriminatory corporate image of the SA National Parks," he said.

He wanted to improve the living standards in the "disease-ridden" compound at Skukuza where most black staff still lived, and consequently improve customer care with the support of a happier workforce.

"There is still a culture of indecision here and what is required is a leadership with a mindset that has made a complete break with the past." — Sapa.

Military

Continued from Page 1

BD 30/3/98

were suspected of wanting to cling to the defence force.

It was significant that the report on the alleged coup plot named several senior former Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) officers now moving into controlling positions in the SANDF, among them Meiring's designated successor, Lt-Gen Siphiwe Nyanda.

The sources said Mandela was worried that Meiring might be trying to anoint his successor or provide motivation for an extension of his period in office. The question to be answered by the commission was whether the moves were motivated by personal ambition or a wider plan to slow change and destabilise democracy while blaming it on others.

Government would be happier if personal ambition lay behind the report. But it had noted the National Party had said it aimed to return to power by 2004, and it could not rule out that the plot allegations were part of a broader attempt to destabilise the ANC government and progress towards a stable democracy.

Another source said government was not sure whether the allegations were "part of a plan to take us back or just to prevent us moving forward".

The incident smacked of the days when an intelligence picture was built to support political ends.

Asked about speculation that Meiring would be fired if suspicions around the report proved accurate, a source said: "If you have a breach of trust by the head of the defence force, I do not think he can continue."

Columbus

Continued from Page 1

BD 30/3/98

sponse in steel antidumping cases and one of the reasons why US companies file them.

Even if their petitions are ultimately unsuccessful and more than half are, the petitioners generally achieve relief from imports while their cases work their way through the system.

SA producers, though their export volumes to the US are small, are generally considered sitting targets, because they operate a de facto two-tier pricing system and charge export customers less than domestic ones..

To avoid duties SA companies have to convince the trade commission that they are not hurting US producers. In the carbon steel plate case, Iscor and Highveld failed to do that. Instead, they entered into "suspension agreements" with the commerce department, agreeing to let the US government set a minimum price at which they could sell into the US in lieu of having duties of up to 51% slapped on their plate.

Under the agreement, SA carbon steel plate is still priced out of the US market. One reason is that the other countries targeted in the suit — Russia, Ukraine and China — obtained much better deals than SA. They were granted quotas that allow them to sell more plate into the US than SA ever exported here and at prices well below those at which Iscor and Highveld were accused of dumping.

David McKay reports that Iscor and Highveld have applied for antidumping measures of their own on Ukranian and Russian exports to SA, the SA Iron and Steel Institute said on Friday.

The institute said that Iscor and Hiveld had applied to the SA Board on Tariffs and Trade for interim provisional duties of 80% against dumped imports of hot-rolled sheet and plate from Ukranian and Russian exporters.

Vanadium prices: Page 19

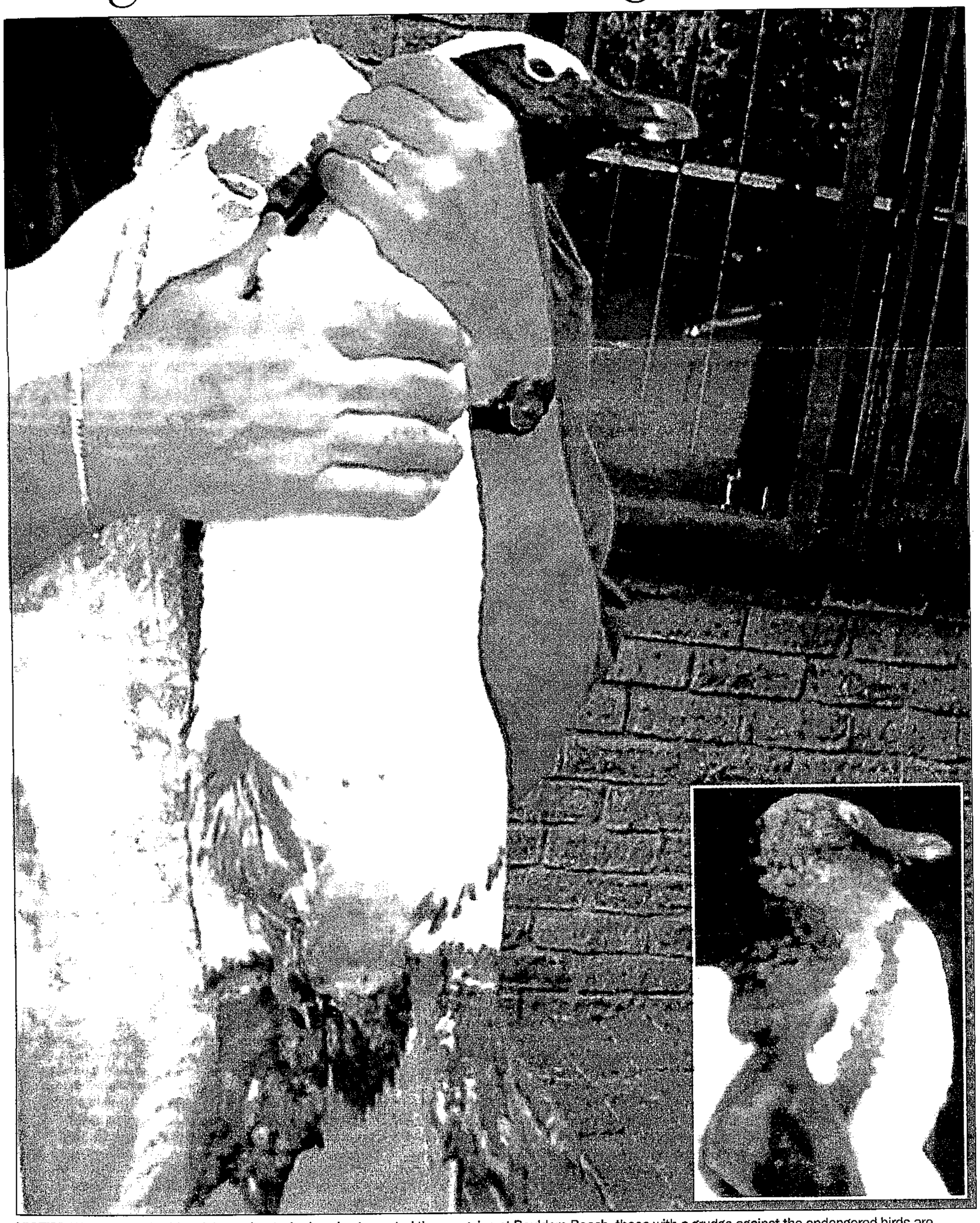
ɔr rates and taxes review

local government," he said.

Speaking on behalf of DP represen-

Penguins take a bashing as authorities haggle

(56)



VICTIM: While the authorities debate about who is going to control the penguins at Boulders Beach, those with a grudge against the endangered birds are attacking them. This one was found with its foot crushed and underbelly injured. **INSET:** Some of the African penguins at Boulders Beach survive human attacks, but this one, which had its head crushed, was not one of the lucky ones.

PICTURES: IAN CAMPBELL

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

CT 30/3/98

WHILE the National Parks Board and the South Peninsula Municipality struggle over who should control the penguins at Boulders beach (and the R2,7 million they bring in every year) penguin bashers are roaming free.

The National Parks Board was due to take over management of the money-spinning birds from South Peninsula Municipality this Wednesday, but the take-over has been postponed because the two authorities can't agree over how to carve up the penguin profits.

And while the authorities haggle, people who don't like the birds seem to be taking advantage of the shift in focus from penguin protection to penguin politics, and have killed and maimed some of these protected and endangered birds.

In the past two weeks Mr Ian Campbell, a volunteer from SANCCOB, has dealt with:

- A penguin that died after its head had been crushed.
- A penguin that had to be put down after the tendons and muscles of one leg were so badly ripped that its leg was almost double its normal length.
- A penguin with a crushed foot.
- Two abandoned chicks, whose parents had possibly been chased from their nests.
- A penguin that survived after being stabbed in the belly.
- A young penguin that cannot stand after being hit on the tail.
- Nests that have been destroyed.

"These are just the ones that have been brought to me since March 16," said Campbell. "I wish I could set up a video camera down there at night and catch these bastards that are doing this.

"Parks Board has been trying to get management control of the penguin colony but there seems to be a problem. Meanwhile the penguins are being attacked,"Campbell said.

Mr Dean Ferreira, manager of nature conservation for South Peninsula Municipality, said the municipality had agreed in principle to hand over control of the penguins to the Parks Board, but they had not agreed on "how much money was going where".

"In the past eight months the money from the entry fees to the Boulders was R1,8m. If Parks Board is going to manage the goose that lays the golden egg, then we say they must manage all the penguins along the entire colony, from Seaforth to Froggy Pond, not just those that people have to pay to see.

"We don't want to be left with managing the problems with the rest of the penguins, which ratepayers also complain about, where the penguins go into their gardens and on their stoeps. My recommendation is that they should extend their management further on either side of Boulders Beach to include all the land where penguins are.

"We're also suggesting that Parks Board extend the penguin-proof barrier for the full extent of the colony, not just at Boulders.

"Neither side were prepared to go ahead with the take-over until the full financial side had been sorted out," Ferreira said.

Parks Board would not comment further. However, in a joint statement with the municipality they said transfer of authority would take place on May 1, while "a process to resolve outstanding issues has been agreed to".

DEADLINE TOMORROW — NOTHING DONE ABOUT REQUIRED CHANGES

Cableway company thumbs its nose at the authorities

(CT) 30/3/98

THE CABLEWAY UPGRADE was approved with strict limitations . But the developers paid little heed to the agreement. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

IT'S the highest-profile case of a developer scorning the authorities.

Tomorrow is the deadline for the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company to put right what it did wrong when it rebuilt sections of the cableway on Table Mountain — and so far it has done nothing.

Now people are saying if developers can flout conditions of approval for buildings on top of Table Mountain — a national monument and soon to become a national park and World Heritage Site — why should anyone else be asked to stick to conditions of approval for developments elsewhere?

They say a clear signal is being sent out to the public: "Don't pay any attention to the restrictions the authorities put on your development, because you can ignore them and get away with it."

The conditions of approval for the cableway upgrade, one of Cape Town's most controversial developments, were the result of protracted negotiations between the council, the cableway company and the National Monuments Council.

They were underpinned by the principle that the new buildings should not have a negative impact on the environment, and in particular that they should not cause an ugly visual effect on the mountain.

To avoid the revamped cableway looking like an office block, the conditions of approval specified exactly the number and size of the windows, that they use non-reflective glass and low-intensity interior lighting.

When the city's officials inspected the completed cableway earlier this year, they found that the developer had:

- Built extra windows in the upper cableway station and made others larger than agreed.
- Glassed in corridor openings and used the wrong glazing.
- Turned the arrival lounge into a bar without permission.
- Constructed timber and steel viewing decks, which project over the mountain edge on raised girders, without submitting plans and contrary to what was negotiated.
- Built a water supply tank above ground level which should have been underground.
- Constructed the base for a 15m high mast on top of the upper cableway for attaching communication aerials, without council approval.

With something as important as this we can't just say: 'Oh well, let's leave it, it's not so bad.'

The council's urban planning committee gave the cableway company until tomorrow to rebuild the reservoir and the viewing platforms. Council was prepared to re-negotiate on the windows, but said an acceptable alternative to the huge mast had to be be found.

Head of the council's land use management Mr Steve Townsend said yesterday the cableway company had made no changes.

"Now they have appealed to the National Monuments Council to approve what they have built. They're trying to twist their arm to agree to the unauthorised construction. Monuments council have established a sub-committee to look at the issue.

"This is the most visual piece of our wonderful natural environment. With something as important as this we can't just say: 'Oh well, let's leave it, it's not so bad,'" Townsend said.

The Monuments Council confirmed that they had formed a committee to look at the cableway's request but would not comment further.

No building on Table Mountain can take place without the approval of both the city council and the monuments council.

Head of UCT's department of environmental science Professor Richard Fuggle said yesterday this was one of the reasons why his committee, appointed by the cabinet to look at the controversial cableway upgrade, had recommended that it should not go ahead until there was only one authority in charge — the National Parks Board.

The government accepted this initially, but then ran scared when the cableway company threatened to sue if the government did not allow it to proceed immediately, and gave the green light.

Said Fuggle: "Sometimes I despair at the spinelessness of our authorities. If there are restrictions on a development, they must be enforced — or why bother to have them? But it seems that developers in this country can get away with blue murder.

"The cableway situation is partly due to a lack of clarity on who is in charge of the mountain chain, so no one is prepared to act. It vindicates my committee's concerns when we told the minister (of arts and culture) that the cableway upgrade should not proceed until one authority was in charge — the Parks Board.

"Now the developers are playing off the two authorities against each other.

"If the cableway company gets away with this, the signal the authorities are sending to all smaller developers is: 'Don't pay any attention to the authorities, because you can get away with it.'"

Wildlife and Environment Society spokesperson Mr Andy Gubb said the authorities had a duty to the nation to ensure the unauthorised building was rectified.

"The cableway is already a horrific development on the mountain. The authorities and the cableway company must realise the mountain does not belong to them, it belongs to the nation. They are there to protect it for us, and for future generations," Gubb said.

ENVIRONMENT — 1998

Anger at permission to cull with bows and arrows

(56) Star 2/4/98

By Rodney Victor

Animal rightists have slammed the Gauteng conservation department's decision to allow bow-and-arrow hunters to cull animals in the Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve.

The reserve, between Alberton and Heidelberg, is the largest wilderness area in the province.

Steve Smit, spokesman for the Front for Animal Liberation and Conservation of Nature, said last night that culling was needed at Suikerbosrand only because conservation policies adopted there encouraged the uncontrolled breeding of wild animals through the exclusion of predators and the burning of the veld every year.

"The use of bows and arrows is a particularly cruel way of killing animals," Smit said. "Many suffer for a long time before they expire."

Last night the Animal Anti-Cruelty League supported this argument and also spoke out against the use of crossbows for culling.

The conservation department's argument that bows and arrows were preferred at Suikerbosrand because it was in a built-up area was "hogwash", Smit said. There was only a small portion of the vast reserve area that fronted on to inhabited areas, near Heidelberg.

Announcing the decision, conservation officials said modern bow-and-arrow technology was as effective a method of killing as a hunting rifle.

Only competent bow hunters would be allowed to take part in the cull, and they would pay thousands of rands to do so, officials said.

Smit said it was tragic that a people that had just been liberated from 300 years of oppression should support the oppression of other beings that were not in a position to voice any opposition.

An operation worth its salt

Bombing of toxic vlei goes without a hitch

(5b) ARG 2/4/98

Topping up: salt is loaded into one of three specially-constructed 'hoppers' carried by the helicopters

Saline solutions: this floating sprinkler system is one of three methods used to introduce salt into the vlei

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The unique operation to dump 300 tons of salt – half of it by helicopter – into the poisoned Wildevoëlvlei system near Kommetjie yesterday went "amazingly well", according to the multi-disciplinary organising team.

Now, they will be watching anxiously for the next week or so to see whether their calculations were correct and whether the increased salinity of the vlei kills the highly toxic blue-green algae which has spread through the system since early January.

The huge algal bloom flourished after indigenous pondweed, which normally keeps it in check, was killed off by an unknown pollutant.

The two Russian-made Mi8 MTV fire-fighting helicopters stationed at Newlands forest were used to fly sorties over the vlei and dump about 150 tons of salt, carried in "hoppers" specially constructed for the occasion by their crews.

Each hopper was initially loaded with three tons of salt, but this amount was increased substantially as the helicopters' fuel loads became progressively lighter after a number of sorties.

Apart from an occasional jamming of the hoppers' gates, the operation proceeded smoothly and the pilots achieved turnaround times of between three and four minutes – substantially faster than planned.

"Things have been going amazingly well and we are dramatically under our flying budget," said South Peninsula Municipality spokesperson Julia Wood during the late lunch break.

The balance of the salt was dissolved and fed into the vlei through the outfall of the nearby sewerage works and via a portable irrigation system.

Staff at the sewerage works "worked their butts off" on Tuesday afternoon and into the night to load the salt into the clarifier so that the saline solution could be pumped into the vlei at the same time as the helicopter operation.

"They worked really hard," said University of Cape Town freshwater ecologist Bryan Davies, a consultant for the project.

"It's quite extraordinary how well this has all gone – it's been like a military operation."

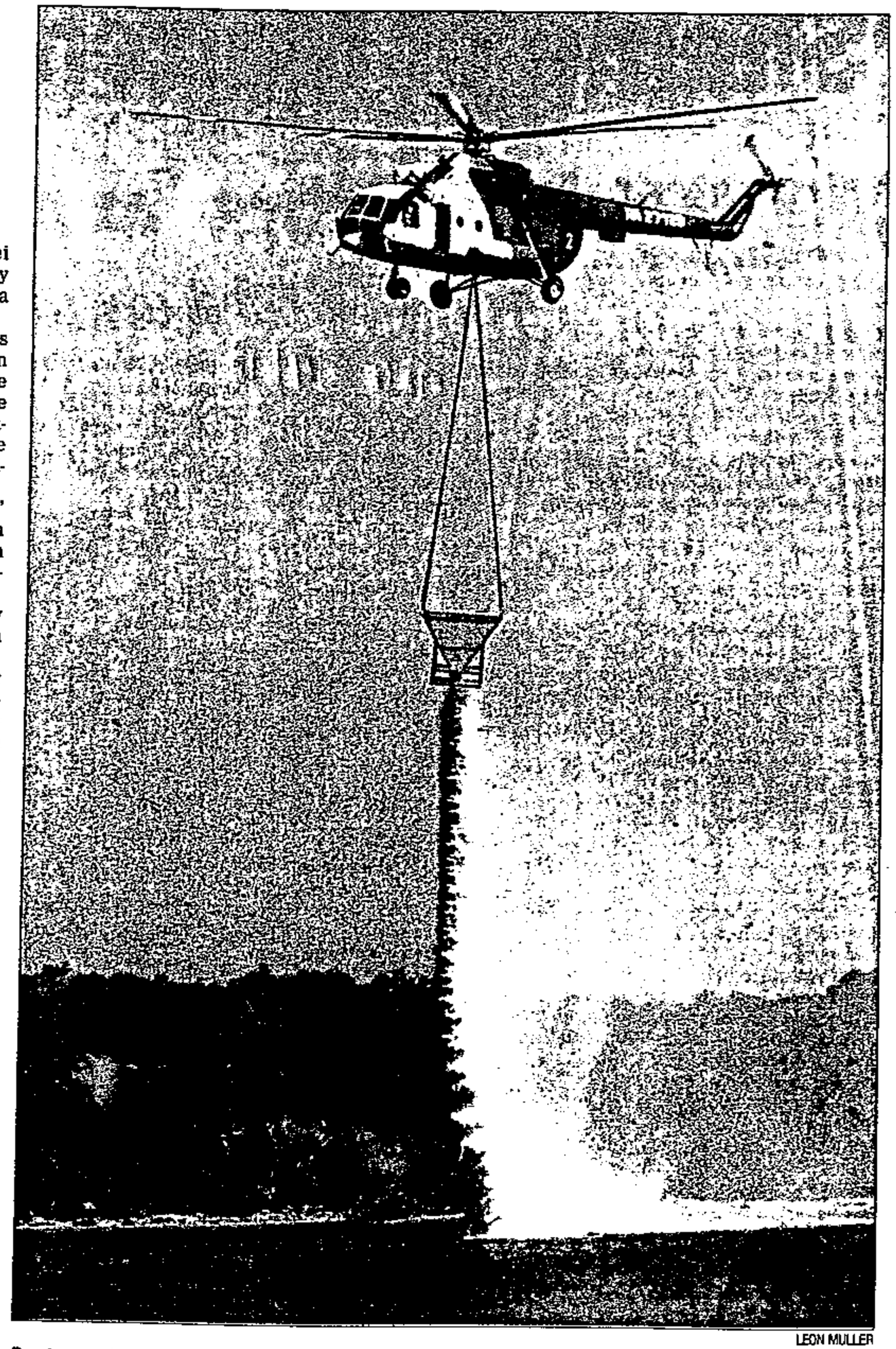
Wally Petersen, a co-founder of the Kommetjie Environmental Awareness Group who was the first to notice the blue-green algal growth in the Wildevoëlvlei, said it was "really encouraging" to see how the different experts – scientists, engineers, environmentalists and local authority staff – had worked together.

"For me this is a first. Previously it was impossible to get that kind of response to an environmental crisis."

But Mr Petersen also warned that the operation would be pointless if the problem of the water quality of the effluent from the sewerage works and of the stormwater flowing into the vlei system from the Kommetjie-Noordhoek valley was not addressed urgently.

"The level of phosphates from the effluent going into the vlei now means we will always have blue-green algae problems," he said.

"I'm hoping this crisis at Wildevoëlvlei will be the catalyst that will ultimately save this valley."



LEON MULLER

Bombs away! a three-ton load of salt is discharged into the Wildevoëlvlei near Kommetjie

SHOCK TREATMENT AS CHOPPERS DUMP SALT ON VLEI

Deadly slime chokes wonder wetland

THE ONCE PRISTINE Wildevoëlvlei in the Noordhoek Valley has been almost destroyed by years of abuse and neglect. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

WHO killed Wildevoëlvlei? Who can we point a finger at for turning what was once a pretty little wetland, and a sound ecosystem, into the deadly slime pan it is today, filled with toxic blue-green algae almost as poisonous as cobra venom.

Yesterday, the air above the vlei was filled with the steady throb of helicopter blades as a chopper flew back and forth dumping 175 tons of salt into the vlei, hoping to kill the salt-intolerant algae. Another 125 tons of salt were pumped into the vlei from the clarifier tank at the sewerage works.

There's no guarantee the R400 000 shock treatment operation will work, or that if it does, that the sudden algae death won't have further negative environmental effects, like de-oxygenating the water. But a drastic situation required drastic measures, the authorities said, and the next eight days will tell if it worked.

Rachel Carson's book *The Silent Spring* shook the world in the 1960s with its futuristic tale of the day the world woke up to a spring when no birds sang. They had all gradually been poisoned by pesticides and pollutants.

The scene at Wildevoëlvlei yesterday could have come out of a futuristic Carson novel. All around the edge of the lake signs hammered into the mud said: "WARNING: Avoid human and animal contact with the blue-green scum."

As one scientist said: "Drink two teaspoons of this stuff and we'll be singing your requiem."

More signs on the beach warned people not to eat the mussels on the rocks which have become lethal after being poisoned by the algae where the vlei runs into the sea.

The authorities have even driven through surrounding suburbs warning people over loudhailers not to go near the vlei as it is a major human health hazard.

How did the vlei get into this state?

The first major mistake was made over 20 years ago when the sewage works were built at Wildevoëlvlei and the effluent pumped into the wetland. This changed it from a seasonal wetland to a permanent one, and altered forever the chemical nature of the water.

As the Noordhoek Valley grew, the storm water from Ocean View and Sun Valley, carrying pesticides and herbides from hundreds of gardens, added to the pollutants in the vlei. An industrial site sprang up nearby, and who knows what spills found their way into Wildevoëlvlei.

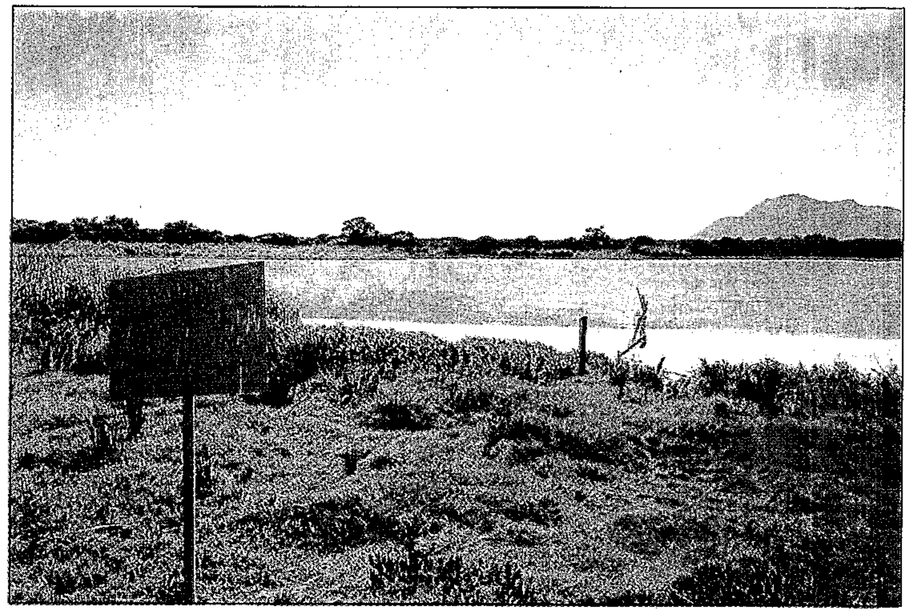
But although the ecosystem was stressed, it was coping, largely because of an indigenous plant called pondweed, which consumes phosphorous from the sewage effluent and kept the nutrient levels down.

But as UCT's Professor Bryan Davies said: "Wildevoëlvlei has been an ecological time bomb since the day the sewerage works were built."

What finally tipped the ecosystem into collapse was when the pondweed was killed off. If the authorities know who was responsible, they're not telling. Some say it was an attempt to rid the vlei of the weed so that boaters could use it. Others say it was an accidental herbicide spill. Whatever it was, it was the straw that broke the ecological back of the vlei.

With no pondweed to "suck up" the unnatural nutrient load, the blue-green algae underwent a population explosion, and as sometimes happens, the algae became toxic.

So who killed Wildevoëlvlei?



DEADLY: After taking a hammering for decades, the ecosytem of Kommetjie's Wildevoëlvlei has finally collapsed. Scientists say two teaspoons of the water could kill a person. *PICTURES: MELANIE GOSLING*

SHOCK TREATMENT: Helicopters flew over Wildevoëlvlei yesterday dropping hundreds of tons of salt in an attempt to kill off the toxic algae.

Was it the person who dumped the herbicide that killed the pondweed? Was it the thousands of residents who dump herbicides on their gardens? The planners who put the sewerage works at the vlei decades ago? Or the thousands of us who flush our lavatories every day without a care about where our excrement ends up?

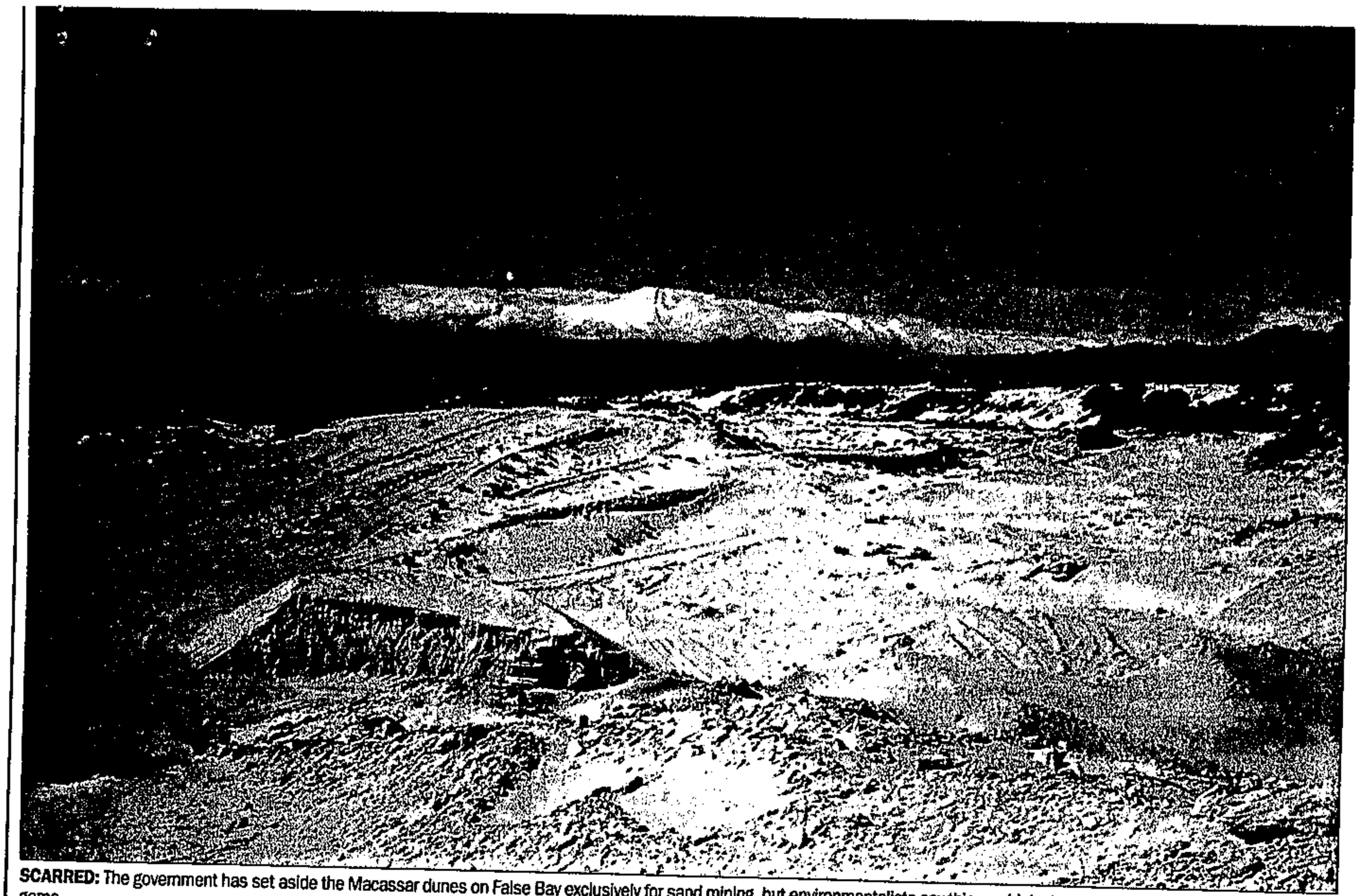
Like the poem about who was responsible for the Hiroshima bomb, the answer must be that we all share some of the blame.

But rather than seek to point fingers, we should rather learn from the Wildevoëlvlei disaster. The important lessons are:

- The long-term consequences of any development — like putting the sewerage works at the vlei — must be assessed before it is approved.
- The environment may be able to take a hammering for decades, but not forever. Ecosystems have a threshold and if abused long enough they will collapse.
- Once ecosystems collapse there is no guarantee that we can right them.
- Whatever disaster occurs in the natural environment, it eventually affects humans.

(56)

CT 2/4/98



SCARRED: The government has set aside the Macassar dunes on False Bay exclusively for sand mining, but environmentalists say this would destroy one of the Cape Flats' botanical gems.

PICTURE: MELANIE GOSLING

Macassar dunes set aside for sand mining

(56) CT 3/4/98

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THERE'S a battle brewing over the Macassar dunes.

The Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs says the sand dunes, which stretch from Muizenberg to Somerset West, are an extremely valuable source of sand which "should be fully exploited" for sand mining.

Environmentalists say the dunes are a botanical gem which have been pinpointed as one of 15 botanical "hotspots" on the Cape Flats and should be conserved. They are the last surviving natural link between the Peninsula mountain chain and the mountain ecosystems of the hinterland.

In November, the Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs issued a notice to the director-general of the Western Cape that no other land use could take place on the dunes — housing or conservation — until all mineable sand deposits had been fully exploited.

They said a report by the Council for Geoscience had provided "irrefutable evidence of the strategic importance of the Macassar sand body" which would extend the life of sand reserves in the Western Cape by 11 years.

Environmentalists say sand mining is not a sustainable land use, and once the dunes are mined, they will be gone. Rehabilitation will not be able to recreate the ecosystem, they say.

The botanical "hotspots" on the Cape Flats are small pockets of the Cape Floral Kingdom which have escaped being ploughed up for roads, agriculture and houses.

They are 80m high in places, the highest dunes for about 500km along the coast on either side of False Bay, and are covered with strandveld vegetation. When the Botanical Society rated the 15 hotspots in order of importance, the Macassar dunes, with 253 different plant species, came third.

They are made up of three separate ecosystems: Coastal, dune and riverine. Trees like indigenous willows and wild peach are found along the Eerste River which flows through the dunes, and it is the only place on the Cape Flats where milkwoods are found.

Besides their high biodiversity, the dunes provide open space for recreation for the largely poor communities surrounding them, and teachers use them as open air biology classrooms.

Locals harvest the reeds for roofing and use many of the plants for traditional medicines.

Mr Paul Hardcastle of Cape Nature Conservation said: "There are a lot of specialised habitats on the Macassar dunes and it forms a very significant conservation area in terms of its size and the natural link with the AECI property at Somerset West and the Wolfgat Nature Reserve."

The Botanical Society rated the dunes as third out of 15 in importance for conservation

Some sand mining was already taking place on the dunes, Hardcastle said.

Cape Nature Conservation has written to the Department of Mineral and Energy to object to the proposed sand mining.

It said mining the dunes to almost sea level would "be to the detriment of the unique and valuable natural systems of the Peninsula chain for the next 1 000 years, to say nothing of depriving current and future communities of the False Bay coastal residential areas of the high quality natural environmental and recreational opportunities".

Nature Conservation said some of the mining operations had already denuded the vegetation and the land had not been rehabilitated.

They called on Mineral and Energy Affairs to withdraw their moratorium on other land uses for the dunes, and join in a process of looking at alternative land uses instead of "merely the annihilation of the Macassar dune system by sand mining".

The Cape Metropolitan Council has commissioned a project to look at alternative land uses for the dunes. The project should be completed by July.

The CMC's Ms Claire Halliday said the Metropolitan Spacial Development Framework, which is not yet complete, had identified the dunes as part of the Metropolitan Open Space System.

"We felt the dunes urgently needed to be looked at because extensive mining has already taken place and there is no sign of rehabilitation. The scarring is pretty severe," she said.

The director of mineral development for the Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs, Mr G A Agenbag, said yesterday that the moratorium had not been lifted.

"There will soon be a shortage in the metropole of sand suitable for mining.

"Even sand reserves as far as Malmesburg are being depleted. Most of it is used for building. The Macassar sand is good quality.

"We have extended the deadline for interested parties to comment on the moratorium until June, and we're sitting around a table to discuss the matter.

"After that, I will have to write to the minister to advise him on whether he should keep the moratorium or not," Agenbag said.

Four nations join forces to save toothfish

BD 3/4/98 (56)

David Greybe

CAPE TOWN — Australia, France and New Zealand have joined SA to put diplomatic pressure on Mauritius and Namibia to stop their ports being used to process the R800m annual "plunder" of the Patagonian toothfish in the southern Indian Ocean.

Denzil Miller, a scientist at Sea Fisheries, said yesterday representatives of the four countries had met in Cape Town last week to co-ordinate efforts to save the prized deepwater fish.

Miller, also chairman of the scientific committee of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, said Namibia and Mauritius would be invited to participate in the next meeting of the 23-nation commission.

There is evidence that permanent damage has already been done to the supply of toothfish due to overfishing in the vicinity of SA's Prince Edward Islands. It is estimated that 80% of the 100 000 tons of toothfish caught illegally in the world in the past 18 months have been taken in the southern Indian Ocean. Australia and France hold sovereignty over other islands in the area.

Miller said the toothfish fetched R15 000 a ton in the Far East. This meant the 100 000-ton illegal catch in the past 18 months was worth R1,5bn.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan said this week at least 90 vessels had reportedly operated in the vicinity of Prince Edward Islands over the past two years. There was evidence some of the vessels were operating with impunity from Namibia and Mauritius — despite diplomatic protests to their governments.

Miller said the Namibian authorities were "extremely helpful" in providing information on toothfish landings in its ports. Mauritius — where a large cold storage facility was built in Port Louis to handle toothfish — had not responded in the same way.

The Mauritian acting high commissioner in Pretoria undertook yesterday to solicit a response from his government. The Namibian high commissioner was unavailable.

City companies linked to toothfish piracy

FISHING (56)

CHARL DE VILLIERS

ST(CM) 5/4/98

AT LEAST two Cape Town fishing companies have been linked to illegal Patagonian toothfish trade operations being run from Mauritius, the "pirate capital" of a largely illicit R1,1-billion industry.

Australian investigators at the Hobart-based International Southern Oceans Longline Fisheries Information Clearing House (Isolfich) this week claimed that local firms Aluship and Hout Bay Fishing either operated vessels involved in the illegal fishery, or traded in illegally-caught Patagonian toothfish.

And another South African company, Premier Fishing, confirmed that a court in Reunion was demanding bail of R9,6-million to release a longliner which had been caught in French waters at the Kergeulen Islands.

Released this week, the Isolfich report also coincided with disclosures that the South African government was trying to persuade both Mauritius and Namibia to join an international environmental system which is battling to stop the plunder of valuable toothfish stocks in the Southern Ocean.

South Africa last year lost at least R500-million to illegal fishing in its Prince Edward Islands economic exclusion zone.

Of the 32 so-called illegal vessels monitored by Isolfich in Mauritius over the past month, five were identified as either being South African-owned, chartered by South Africans for offshore companies, or used by local operators.

The vessels with South African links used harbour facilities at Port Louis in Mauritius, said to handle up to half the world's trade in the toothfish.

Hout Bay Fishing spokesman Colin van Schalkwyk said it was "not impossible" that his company's longliners had fished illegally.

He confirmed that Hout Bay Fishing landed toothfish at Mauritius and Walvis Bay, with most catches destined for Japan, Taiwan or the US.

"We only fish in international waters outside the jurisdiction of CCAMLR, and as far as I know we've never caught Patagonian toothfish illegally. If we have, it's never been proved."

He said Hout Bay Fishing acted as agents for the Cape Flower, a Panamian-registered vessel named in the Isolfich report.

Van Schalkwyk said Sea Fisheries had never produced any proof of illegal fishing by his vessels, and Sea Fisheries scientists had also never produced data to prove that the Patagonian toothfish was endangered.

"Instead of doing everything possible to keep us from fishing, Sea Fisheries should give us licences and let us patrol our own waters and give them the information they want about toothfish," he added.

Van Schalkwyk said the Mauritian authorities had little interest in curtailing toothfish operations.

"The government in Mauritius says why lose the golden egg when scientists cannot produce the data to say why they must stop."

Aluship has also denied owning a ship involved in illegal fishing.

Brian Flannagan, a spokesman for Premier Fishing, said his company had only acted as agents for the Explorer.

"We are not prepared to bail out the ship because she was not fishing illegally. She was only passing through French waters back to Mauritius," he added.

'THEY HAVE NOT RECTIFIED ANYTHING'

NMC stands firm on cableway 'flaws'

CT 8/4/98 (75)

THE CITY COUNCIL may go to court over deviations to approved plans for the upgrading of the Table Mountain cableway. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THE National Monuments Council has told the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company it will not condone any deviation from the approved plans for the multi-million rand upgrading of the cableway.

This means the cableway company will now have to put right what it did wrong when it rebuilt sections of the cableway on Table Mountain during the recent revamping.

If the company does not rectify the deviations from the approved plans, the city council may take it to court.

When the city council discovered earlier this year that the cableway company had flouted several of the conditions imposed on the upgrading by the authorities, they ordered the company to rectify the mistakes.

The deviations from the plans, approved after lengthy negotiations with all parties, included putting in extra windows and making others larger than agreed, constructing timber and steel viewing decks which protruded over the mountain edge, building a water supply tank above ground instead of underground and building the base for a 15m mast on the upper cableway station without approval.

After the council told the company to rectify the deviations by March 31, the company then appealed to the National Monuments Council to approve the new buildings, including the deviations.

No building on Table Mountain can take place without the approval of both the city council and the monuments council.

Council spokesperson Ms Laura Robinson said yesterday they had appointed a sub-committee to look at the cableway's request, but had told the cableway company that they could not condone any deviation from the approved plans.

"We've told them they must adhere to what was approved.

So far we have had no response from them," Robinson said.

This is not some parochial little quarrel. Table Mountain is an internationally recognised natural asset

Head of the city council's land use management, Mr Steve Townsend, said yesterday:

"The next step is the developer will either carry out what we have told them to do, or we will go to court.

"So far they have not rectified anything."

Townsend said the developer would have to close up the extra windows, and to rebuild the viewing platforms so that they are lower in height and set back against the mountain.

"It's possible that we will agree to the reservoir being above ground, and no decision has been taken on the mast yet.

"We're hoping they can find a way to make the 15m mast less visually obtrusive. It's got to go somewhere," Townsend said. He said he was "delighted" that the monuments council had backed the city.

"If developers deviate from what has been agreed, especially in highly sensitive areas like the top of Table Mountain, then they must bear the consequences. This is not some parochial little quarrel. Table Mountain is an internationally recognised natural asset. Both authorities have done their jobs properly and fairly," Townsend said.

Cableway company spokesman Mr John Harrison declined to comment yesterday.

OFFENDING STRUCTURE: A file picture of one of the new viewing platforms on Table Mountain which may have to be rebuilt so that they are lower and set back against the mountain.

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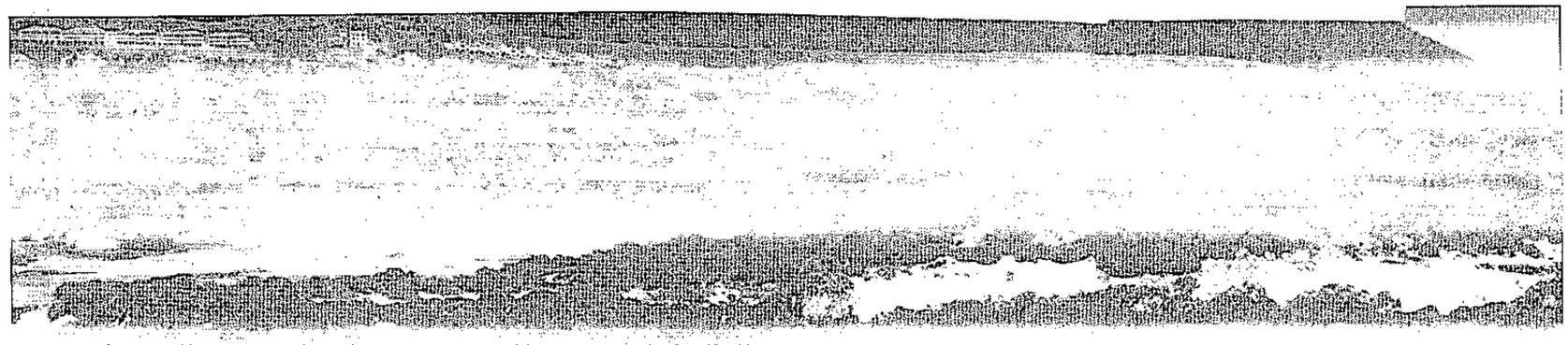


JOHN YELD

Still in shape: although part of the Fish Hoek dune system is dying, remnants of the original sand dunes still exist, to the joy of conservationists

Dune development gets thumbs-down

ARG 8/4/98 (56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The long-standing and highly controversial proposal to develop houses on Fish Hoek's sand dunes has been given a unanimous thumbs-down by the Cape Peninsula National Park committee.

The committee's decision, after a special meeting to discuss the issue, was sent to the Western Cape government nearly a month ago, but there has been no response to it yet by provincial authorities.

The development proposal for Extension 7 Zone C includes more than 300 houses on the sand dunes within the existing Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment (CPPNE). Any development within the CPPNE requires a permit.

High Court action is pending over the provincial government's 1994 decision to rezone the property for development, and argument in this case will include the validity or otherwise of a permit issued in August 1987 by then environment affairs minister John Wiley, preventing any development of Zone C.

Despite the court action, then Western Cape environment minister Kobus Meiring asked the park committee in January for its opinion on the development proposal (He has been replaced by Gerald Morkel.)

The park committee has effectively taken over the functions of the former CPPNE management advisory committee, which was always opposed to the development of Zone C. At a meeting in Fish Hoek last month, the national park committee listened to presentations by the developer's project team and by the Silvermine Valley Coalition, which is opposing the development.

During discussion afterwards, committee member Richard Cowling pointed out that, although part of the Fish Hoek dune system was dying, remnants of the original dunes still existed and would probably remain as a mobile system for the next two-to-three decades.

Professor Cowling, who heads the Institute for Plant Conservation at the University of Cape Town, said it was important to note how much of the dune system already had been destroyed by development.

Every remaining piece that could be conserved was important, and he considered the area irreplaceable.

The dunes, which are now largely covered by alien rooikrans vegetation, could be restored, and their cultural and natural attributes would be of importance to the Cape Peninsula National Park now being created, said Professor Cowling.

According to the minutes of the meeting, it was pointed out that the Silvermine River corridor could be retained if the proposed development of Zone C was rejected.

But if that development took place, the river area would be "irretrievably lost".

Committee member and former city councillor Eulalie Stott said she felt the need for housing should not be overlooked, and expressed concern that the managers of the national park would not have enough funds to rehabilitate the area.

Committee wants Wildlife Society's objections on paper

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The Cape Peninsula National Park committee has been asked to convene an urgent public workshop to discuss charges by the Wildlife Society that the public is being prevented from effective participation in its deliberations and policy-making.

But the angry committee is demanding that the society puts specific allegations on paper so that these can be thrashed out at a formal meeting between them.

Committee chairman Brian Huntley told a meeting this week he was a long-standing member of the Wildlife Society and that he had expressed his concern about the allegations to its president, Graham Avery.

It was "arrant nonsense" to suggest the committee met behind closed doors and kept its documents secret, said Professor Huntley.

"We do not want to operate under a mantle of hearsay and insinuations," he said.

The allegations were raised by the Wildlife Society's Western Cape regional manager Andy Gubb in a newsletter earlier this year.

Pointing out that the society had been a strong supporter of the proposed national park, he wrote: "It is with great disappointment that (the Wildlife Society) now finds itself in an untenable position in relation to both the committee and the national park co-ordinator. Their style has been anything but inclusive and transparent."

Report speaks of serious irregularities in Mpumalanga Parks Board

Star 9/4/98 (56)

Nelspruit – The Mpumalanga Parks Board chief executive officer, Alan Gray, contracted his own helicopter company for board duties without declaring his interests or obtaining alternative quotes, according to an auditor-general's report.

African Eye News Service said that the report claimed Gray also failed to declare that he and his wife co-directed a travel agency which handled R520 979 of the board's business.

The report was selectively released to the media yesterday by the province's embattled environmental affairs MEC, David Mkhwanazi, in contravention of an April 9 embargo set by the auditor-general.

The report alleges a serious lack of internal and financial controls by the board, including the payment of R5,6-million without proper source documentation or agreements. The payments all by-passed the provincial tender board.

The report alleges that Gray was the only director of Lowveld Helicopter Services which was chartered on 17 different occasions for R1,2 million to fly Gray and Mkhwanazi.

The report also claimed that R296 000 was spent on credit cards used by Gray, his assistant and financial director without proper source documentation. The amount was repaid to the board by the time the audit was completed.

Gray said he had noted Mkhwanazi's press release and expressed surprise at the manner in which the report had been made public. – Sapa

CALL TO INVEST IN BOTANY

SA plants under serious threat

(56)

CT 9/4/98

AT LEAST 53 SPECIES have become extinct, giving South Africa the second highest extinction rate in the world. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

OVER one in 10 plants worldwide is at risk of becoming extinct.

This was announced at the launch in Cape Town yesterday of the World Conservation Union Red List of Threatened Plants, the first global assessment of plants ever compiled.

The list revealed that 12,5%, or 34 000, of the world's plants are threatened. In South Africa, 11% of the nation's 20 000 plants face extinction.

The Red List is the result of 20 years of slogging by scientists and conservation organisations in a global partnership aimed at presenting a picture of the state of the world's plants.

The implications for people are serious. Chairperson of the World Conservation Union Species Survival Commission, Dr David Brackett, said the number of threatened plants was "staggering".

"We are talking about the organisms on which all life depends. Plants clothe us, feed us and our domestic animals, and provide us with most of our medicines. We need to invest in botany. We cannot afford to neglect the fate of the world's plants," Brackett said.

South Africa's record was particularly poor. So far 53 of our plants have become extinct, making us the country with the second highest extinction rate in the world, after Australia, which has lost 71.

The Red List has shown that:

- 33 798 species of the 270 000 known plants are considered at risk of extinction. They are found in about 200 different countries.
- A large number of plants known to have medicinal value are facing extinction.
- Seventy-five percent of the yew family, a source of cancer-fighting compounds, are threatened.
- Twelve percent of the willow family, from which aspirin derives, is threatened.
- Fourteen percent of the 380 species which have become extinct occurred in South Africa.

Dr John Ledger, director of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, said to avoid extinctions, it was essential to look after entire ecosystems.

"We must adopt integrated conservation policies that aim to manage entire ecosystems. If we look after our ecosystems, single species will look after themselves."

Although the Red List is as comprehensive as possible, the coverage of many of the world's regions is fragmentary and incomplete, particularly the poorer countries of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and South America.

The clearing of natural vegetation for crops has had a big impact on biodiversity. As South Africa's population continues to grow, the pressure on the remaining natural areas will increase.

The problem is exacerbated by urbanisation spilling over into areas of high plant diversity.

There are numerous examples on the Cape Flats alone. Both Milnerton and Kenilworth racecourses are about to be developed. Milnerton racecourse has 232 different plant species, of which 10 are on the Red List, and Kenilworth has 210, of which nine are on the Red List. Macassar Dunes, which has five Red List species, could be ploughed up for sandmining. It was pinpointed as one of 15 "hotspots" that are in urgent need of conservation.

Auditor's report takes parks board CEO to task

NELSPRUIT — The Mpumalanga Parks Board CEO contracted his own helicopter company for board duties without declaring his interests or obtaining alternative quotes, according to an auditor-general's report.

Alan Gray, the architect of the contentious Dolphin deal, also reportedly failed to declare that he and his wife co-directed a travel agency which handled R520 979 of business for the board.

The report was selectively released to media yesterday by embattled provincial environmental affairs MEC David Mkhwanazi, in contravention of a April 9 embargo set by the auditor-general.

The report notes a serious lack of internal and financial controls in the board, including payment of R5,6m without adequate source documentation or agreements.

The payments — which all bypassed the provincial tender board — included R1,3m to a computer firm for unusable computers and R401 900 for furniture.

The special report said Gray was the only director of Lowveld Helicopter Services when it was chartered to fly both him and Mkhwanazi on 17 different occasions for R1,2m.

Other shortcomings identified in the report included the blanket payment of R330 000 to cover 60 staff cellular telephones and hotel bills at luxury foreign hotels, including the Grand Hyatt and London Hilton, which cost up to R3 764 per person.

(56) BD 9/4/98

The auditor-general also warned that R296 000 was spent on credit cards used by Gray, his assistant and financial director, without proper source documentation. The amount was repaid to the board by the time the audit was completed.

Although the auditor-general noted Gray's positive attitude to corrective steps, the report said no attempts were made to recover irregular expenditure.

Gray said yesterday he welcomed the auditor-general's report, and declined to answer specific allegations.

However, Gray said, he looked forward to taking part when the report was debated in the Mpumalanga legislature's portfolio committee on public accounts.

Gray said he remained convinced that his administration had not done anything illegal. He would strongly contest any allegations of possible self-enrichment.

Earlier yesterday, Mkhwanazi ordered a special investigation of the board and its CEO.

Mkhwanazi said he was deeply distressed by the report and had ordered the formation of a sub-committee to investigate the questionable expenditure.

The sub-committee, still to be named, will report to Mkhwanazi by May 15.

Gray said he was aware of Mkhwanazi's press release and expressed surprise at the manner in which the report had been made public prior to its embargo.

He asked whether or not an attempt had been made to manipulate the process.

The National Party (NP) in Mpumalanga criticised Mkhwanazi yesterday for pre-empting Parliament and appointing an internal investigation of the board.

"Mkhwanazi and a number of board members are implicated in this report.

"How can they decide to investigate themselves?" asked Lucas Nel, the NP's leader in the provincial legislature.

"This is a typical Mpumalanga reaction to news of irregularities, where commissions of inquiry and internal investigations are appointed before auditor's reports are even tabled in Parliament," Nel said. — Sapa.

Row over Nat's nature reserve Bill

CHARL DE VILLIERS

(56)

ST 12/4/98 (CM)

A NATIONAL Party member has been asked to recuse himself from all discussions of the Western Cape Private Nature Reserves Bill after he was accused of having a financial interest in it.

According to the Habitat Council, Pierre-Jean Gerber, who tabled the private member's Bill and is also chairman of the provincial standing committee on environmental affairs, has applied to have at least 16 of his rural land-holdings declared private nature reserves.

"For these reasons we are obliged to request that, with regard to the consideration of this Bill, Gerber recuses himself from the discussions and votes (if any) of the standing committee," Habitat Council executive officer Marie-Lou Roux said in written objections to the committee secretary this week.

She said Gerber's Bill may be unconstitutional because owners of private natures could benefit financially from a proposed private nature reserve fund which would include money voted by the Western Cape legislature.

The Habitat Council was also opposed to the proposal that private nature reserves, as envisaged by Gerber, could be developed and then deproclaimed by the owner without any consideration for the conservation value of the land.

The Habitat Council viewed such a set-up "as potentially open to serious misuse", Roux said. The law would further fragment environmental legislation, and there was no justification for a separate Bill on private nature reserves.

Roux said Gerber's applications related to land he owned in several districts, including Riversdale, Ladismith, Ceres, Malmesbury and Caledon.

BELEAGUERED . . . MEC David Mkhwanazi authorised the purchase of R1,3 million worth of unuseable computers.

Mkhwanazi in trouble again

(56) CP 12/4/98

Report reveals financial irregularities of millions

By Phalane Motale

THE future of Mpumalanga's embattled Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) MEC, David Mkhwanazi, could once more hang in the balance after the release of a special report by the Auditor General into alleged financial irregularities in the Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) amounting to millions of rands.

The report, released this week, alleged serious irregularities in the MPB, including the payment of R5,6 million without proper source documentation or agreements.

It claims Mkhwanazi bypassed the provincial tender board by authorising a R1,3 million purchase of computers from a local supplier.

The computers were later found to be incompatible with the computer system used by the provincial government.

The report claims that by May 31 1997 the total amount outstanding on the loans account of the DEAT was R6,8 million and that the "not negotiable" stamp on cheques totalling R848 576 had been cancelled.

This increased the lack of control over payments and there was the possibility that beneficiaries did not receive their cheques.

In reaction to the report, Mkhwanazi has appointed a sub-committee to investigate the questionable expenditure. The sub-committee, still to be named, must report to Mkhwanazi by May 15.

The decision immediately came under fire from the National Party in Mpumalanga, which on Wednesday accused Mkhwanazi of pre-empting the provincial legislature by appointing an internal investigation into financial irregularities in the MPB.

"Mkhwanazi and a number of directors on the Parks Board are themselves implicated in the report. How can they decide to investigate themselves?" asked NP provincial leader Dr Lucas Nel.

Since pressure has been mounting from opposition parties in the provincial legislature, more than 60 officials who were attached to the Mpumalanga Environmental Conservation Tourism Agency (Mecta) have been suspended amid renewed claims of mismanagement and overstaffing of the department.

After the suspensions there was a flood of telephonic death threats against Parks Board directors.

Late last year the Mpumalanga provincial cabinet ordered that Mecta be disbanded, after noting that Mkhwanazi had appointed substantial numbers of new staff despite a moratorium on new staff.

The present storm comes months after Mkhwanazi was accused of turning the department into a "family business" by allegedly employing immediate relatives and family members in high positions.

The report also claims MPB's CEO, Alan Gray, failed to declare his interests in companies given contracts by the MPB.

Gray's helicopter company, Lowveld Helicopter Services, was awarded a contract of R1,2 million.

Lowveld had received R1,2 million from the MPB for 17 chartered flights undertaken by him and Mkhwanazi between May 16 1996 and January 31 last year.

In February last year MPB paid R22 000 in charter fees to Lowveld to fly Alan Gray from Grahamstown to Nelspruit and back to attend an MPB meeting.

An amount of R590 025 was also paid to fly directors of a company to various destinations between September 22 and December 18, 1996.

Gray also failed to declare that he and his wife were co-directors of a travel agency which handled R520 979 of business for the MPB and that a public relations company owned by his son was paid more than R100 000.

Although Gray claimed he had resigned as director of the travel agency in December 1996, according to records at the Register of Companies he was still a director at the end of June last year.

Documents could not be found to substantiate the payment of R296 819 for credit card debts submitted by Gray and his personal assistant between September 1996 and February 1997.

Other shortcomings identified in the report include:

- There was no formal policy or any clearly defined procedures for the official and private use of cellphones prior to March 5 1997.
- Policies and procedures laid down for the claims for expenses incurred on overseas trips, were sometimes incorrectly applied. Three delegates were accommodated between September 2 and September 4 in the luxury London Hilton Hotel at a cost of R33 873.

Travelling claims amounting to R235 479 had been paid to 10 secretaries and personal assistants working after hours between July 1996 and June 1997. In some instances, the compensation had amounted to 49 percent of their basic salaries.

- Inadequate control was exercised over the use of petrol cards and the MPB had paid out R628 688 for petrol without substantiating documentation.

According to vehicle fleet management reports, fuel charged for had exceeded their vehicle's tank capacity in 33 instances between October and December 1996.

- Fruitless expenditure had been incurred during the commercialisation process in order to establish a representative office in Malaysia. A consultancy firm had been paid R26 000 and R180 000 on June 28 and July 16 1996 respectively, to set up the office.

But according to the MPB, the office had not been set up because such a need no longer existed.

At the time of going to press, Mkhwanazi was not available for comment. His spokesman, Abdullah Phiri, told City Press that Mkhwanazi was attending a meeting in Johannesburg.

Although the Auditor General noted Gray's positive attitude to corrective steps, the report said no attempts were made to recover irregular expenditure from him.

Gray had welcomed the report but declined to answer specific allegations against himself.

He said he was convinced his administration had done nothing illegal and strongly contested allegations of possible self-enrichment.

CAPE TIMES
TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 1998 ★

MILLIONS OF LITRES 'DISAPPEAR' ANNUALLY

Used oil being poured into SA's precious waters

(56) CT 14/4/98

SOUTH AFRICA has one of the lowest used lubricant oil collection rates in the world, according to a recent survey. The uncollected oil could be causing untold harm. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

EVERY year 125 million litres of used lubricant oil "disappears" in South Africa and no one can say where it goes.

Most of it probably finds its way into the environment after being illegally dumped into sewers, stormwater drains and onto the soil in thousands of backyards throughout the country.

Some of it is burned in industrial furnaces, giving off emissions harmful to the atmosphere.

Last year, 330 million litres of lubricating oil were sold in South African. Of this about 160m litres were consumed during usage. Another 45m were collected as used oil for recycling or safe disposal, which leaves 125m unaccounted for.

The "missing" used oil poses a danger both to the natural environment and to human health, as it contains a high concentration of heavy metals, including lead, zinc and chromium, which can be toxic, while certain compounds in used oil are carcinogenic and mutagenic.

It also coats birds' feathers, so they can't fly, and clings onto reeds and rocks.

According to head of Cape Metropolitan Council's (CMC) waste management Mr Peter Novella, lubricant oils are a "major problem".

"It is the responsibility of the oil companies to make sure used oil gets into the formal waste system or is recycled. We take it to Vissershok hazardous waste site, where some of it is recycled to make low-grade furnace oil.

"The stuff that is contaminated with grit or rags we can't recycle and it is disposed of in landfill sites in a special way so that biological activity breaks it down," he said.

The oil disposed of at Vissershok forms part of the 45m litres cited above as "recovered" oil.

In response to the problem, the local oil industry three years ago formed the Rose Foundation, a non-profit organisation which manages the collection of used oil.

Mr Simon Norton, who heads the foundation, says only 14% of used oil in South Africa is collected for disposal or recycling — one of the lowest used oil collection rates worldwide, according to a recent survey done by the American Petroleum Institute.

People pour used lubricant oil down drains, onto gardens or dump it in the dustbin

In comparison Australia collects 23%, Spain 29%, Sweden 40% and France 43%.

Said Norton: "The man in the street is still the most difficult to control. People pour it down drains, onto gardens or dump it in the dustbin.

"There is also a lot of resistance from industry to ensuring that their used oil is collected for recycling or safe disposal. They allow fly-by-night collectors to take it at a higher price than ours, where it is used to burn in furnaces.

"When the price of crude oil goes up, so does the price of heavy furnace oil and there is a demand for used lubricant oil as a substitute. If it is not burned at sufficiently high temperatures, it will give off harmful emissions, including lead.

"Some people use it for environmentally unacceptable practices, including spraying it onto dirt roads to keep the dust down. When it rains, this oil gets into the groundwater supply."

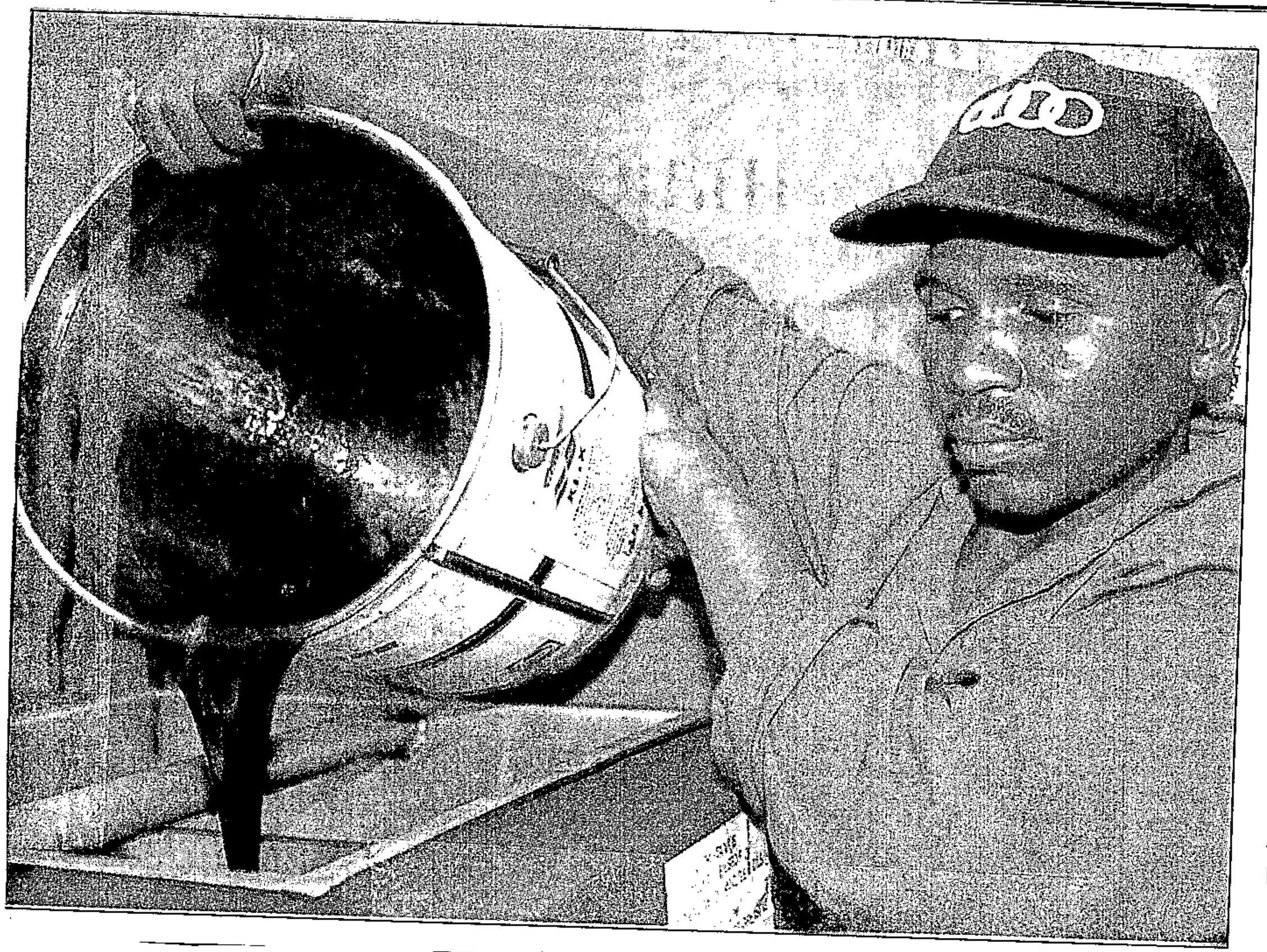
Motorists who take their cars for servicing probably never think about where their used oil will end up, and few are likely to ask their local garages.

Said Norton: "If the statistics are anything to go by, there are an unacceptable number of people who are not disposing of their used lubricating oil in an environmentally acceptable manner.

"This has severe impacts on the environment."

Head of CMC's industrial effluent section Mr Danie Klopper said if the used oil was disposed of in small quantities all around the country over a year, the likelihood of picking it up in the stormwater system was small.

The Rose Foundation, which has 15 000 collection sites in South Africa, can be contacted at (021) 448-7492.



RECYCLED: South Africans dump about 125 million litres of used lubricant oil into the environment every year. This is some oil that won't harm the environment, as Nelson Dumezweni ensures it is deposited in a tank for recycling by the Rose Foundation.

PICTURE: THEMBINKOSI DWAYISA

Body to help develop SA's maritime industry

Robyn Chalmers (5b)

THE SA Maritime Safety Authority, which opened its doors yesterday, will play a key role in boosting international and regional co-operation as well as surveying ships and preventing sea pollution.

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj said yesterday that since 1994, SA's ports had experienced "unprecedented growth" in ship calls and the volume of cargo handled.

It was important that SA therefore kept pace with the maritime world in terms of development.

Maharaj said the authority would look to assist in the development of other safety authorities on the African continent while providing marine administration functions.

The agency would be partially self-funding, non-profit and commercialised, and it would have a limited government appropriation for the first two years.

It would carry out all the existing functions of the former chief directorate of shipping.

He said the implication of a partially self-funding authority was that all foreign and local vessels calling at SA ports would be required to pay a levy based on tonnage.

"Due to a relatively low levy calculation when compared to other countries, this was acceptable to the local maritime industry," he said.

The authority would have an operations unit, a policy unit and a corporate support division to handle all financial, human resources and information technology issues.

Maharaj said that as the "core" business of the authority was mastered and applied efficiently, opportunities would be investigated for the development of its business.

Authority CEO Brian Watt said its establishment heralded a new era for SA in the realm of ship safety and pollution control.

"I believe that our new-found autonomy will make the service that we provide to the shipping and fishing industry more cost effective and efficient."

The authority's other functions included the registration of ships, the development of a national port authority, the establishment of a coastal patrol service and the management of marine casualties and wrecks.

SA losing plant species at an alarming rate

(4)

Mar 16/4/98

A special red list of flora under threat has been compiled by scientists in the field

By Kim Helfrich
Pretoria Correspondent

South Africa has lost 53 plant species to extinction – a sad reflection on the importance plant conservation has enjoyed in the country to date, according to Dr Ian MacDonald, World Wildlife Fund South Africa chief executive.

He was speaking at the launch of the 1997 World Conservation Union (IUCN) red list of threatened plants. The list, the result of 20 years work by scientists, conservation organisations, botanical gardens and museums, reports that at least one in every 10 plant species worldwide is at risk of extinction.

South Africa is renowned for its rich and unique flora, particularly the fynbos region of the Western Cape, one of the world's listed floral kingdoms.

"The sense of pride South Africans have in this fact is dampened by our inability to manage biodiversity successfully," MacDonald said. "The loss and potential loss of plant diversity as indicated in the red list should be a primary concern for all South Africans."

WWF South Africa was committed to rectifying this sorry state of affairs and was working with numerous other organisations in the battle to save flower and plant species.

Only one country, Australia, has lost more plant species – 71 – to extinction. The red list reveals that 12,5% (about 34 000) of the world's plant species are threatened.

In South Africa, probably the most thoroughly studied country on the African continent, 11% of the nation's 20 000 plant species are at risk.

The numbers are staggering, not only because they are exceedingly large, but because we are talking about the organisms on which all animal life depends, said David Brackett, chairman of the IUCN species survival commission.

Plants clothe us, feed us and our domestic animals and provide most of our medicines, yet our knowledge of their status is woefully inadequate.

"We need to invest in botany. We cannot afford to neglect the fate of the world's plants," Brackett said.

Information about Southern African plant species in the red list was obtained through a network of botanists and conservationists in national and provincial agencies, herbaria, universities and conservation NGOs (non-governmental organisations).

The interaction between amateurs, professionals, government bodies and NGOs has resulted in a unique conservation network which will play an increasingly important role in conserving the sub-continent's flora, said Craig Hilton-Taylor of the National Botanical Institute (NBI), which co-ordinated collation of information for the red list locally.

We must adopt integrated conservation policies which aim to manage entire ecosystems in South Africa, said Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) director Dr John Ledger.

If we look after our ecosystems, single species will look after themselves.

NBI chief executive Professor Brian Huntley was of the opinion that the international Convention on Biological Diversity was the most important instrument yet created for conservation globally.

Its implementation will be dependent on the availability of the type of information provided in the red list of threatened plants.

The convention focuses on the responsibility of sovereign nations regarding biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use.

It is pertinent to note that most species listed are confined to single countries. The future of these species is in the hands of individual nations, the majority of which are signatories to the convention.

While the red list is a comprehensive assessment of the status of known plant species, there is much still unknown.

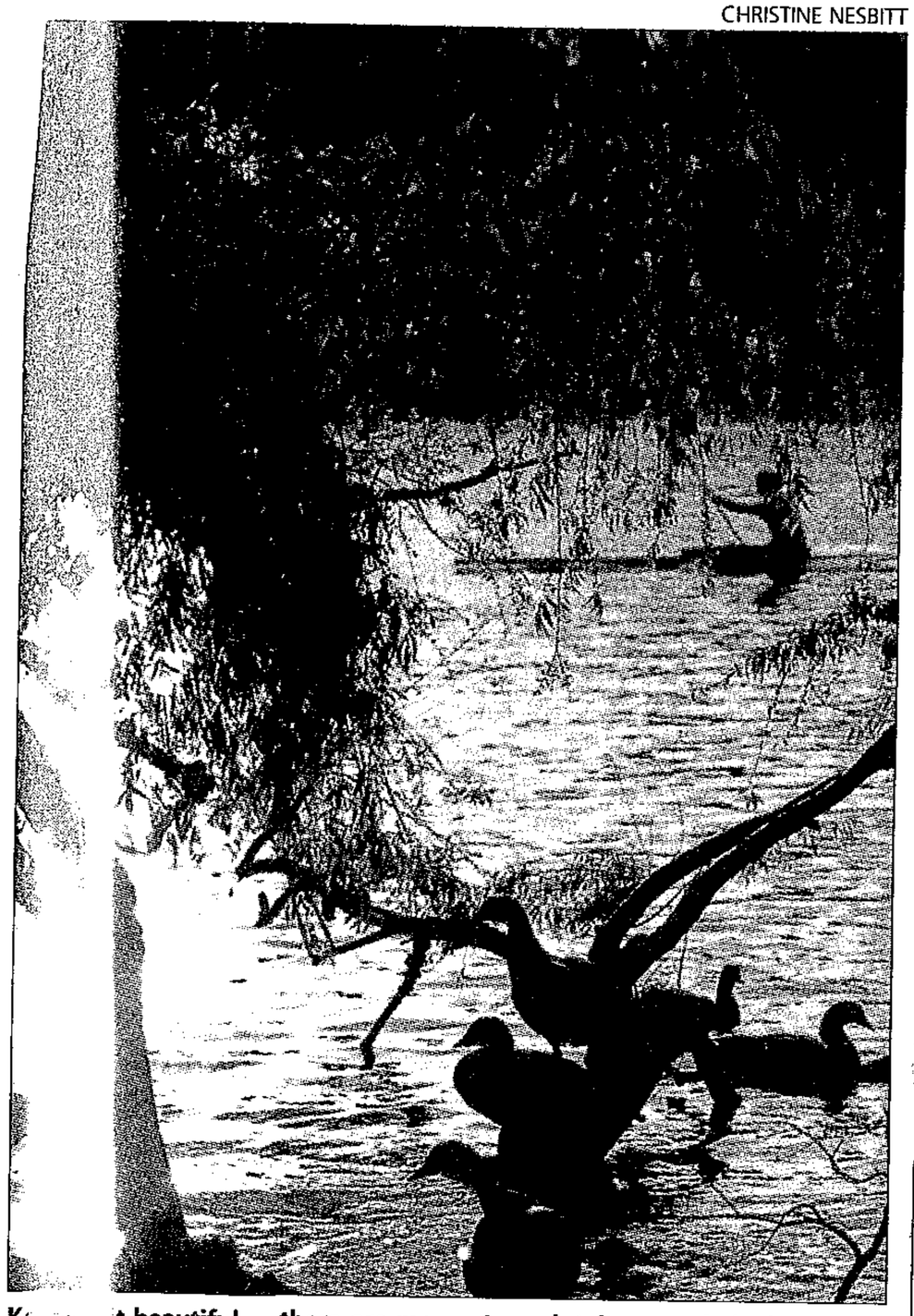
For example, the list reflects a distinctly regional bias. Comprehensive assessments from north America, Australia and southern Africa are included. Coverage of other regions is more fragmentary and often incomplete.

The rest of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and South America, when more fully studied, will undoubtedly be found to harbour many more threatened plants than documented in the first edition.

The list is an assessment of vascular plants – ferns, conifers and flowering plants – only. Plants not assessed for the first edition include mosses, lichens, algae and fungi.

"I have no doubt once we do more research we will find the figure of 12,5% is very conservative. We need to step up our commitment to effective conservation action and move quickly to conserve species we know are already at risk," Brackett said.

CHRISTINE NESBITT



Ke[illegible] t beautiful ... there are moves to maintain green belts in Greater Joh[illegible] burg, such as this one in Emmarentia.

Councils committed to 'green' city

(56) Star 16/4/98

Various plans are afoot to turn the tide against urban decay in Johannesburg

By Bunty West
City Desk

Tree planting and "people"s parks" are slowly turning the tide against urban decay as councils use their limited funding to green the city and its environs.

Councils are taking their commitment to green previously disadvantaged areas seriously, despite the cut-back in the tending of grass verges and motor embankments around Greater Johannesburg.

In the Eastern Council steps are being taken to set up parks' forums in the inner city.

"By talking to the residents and enlisting their help to control crime and monitor the parks, we hope to see an improvement in the inner city within a year," said parks executive officer Michelle van Blerk.

A team of gardeners is now deployed permanently at Rhodes Park in Kensington while in Alexandra, Trees for Africa will supply seedlings for the community parks.

"If homeowners in established suburbs would cut their own verges, we could deploy staff to cut central reservations and parks on a more regular basis," Van Blerk said.

In the west, grass cutting in public areas is done bi-annually because of financial constraints.

Council offers trees for planting from its own nurseries and helps communities to green their suburbs.

"A project in Meadowlands will begin soon and Trees for Africa has offered 10 000 seedlings for disadvantaged areas," said Sam Matlhabegoane, the West's executive officer of horticulture.

> **"We want to create community parks in each suburb"**

Also planned for the year is an Arbor Day scheme to eradicate invader plants and to "green" mine dumps.

The Metro region's Alan Buff, the manager of parks and cemeteries, said there were several projects in the pipeline.

At the Botanic Gardens several theme gardens were taking shape, including a Shakespeare garden and a Literary garden.

"We are looking at the development of a children's garden, which will involve curriculum 2005.

"This involves bringing in schoolchildren to explain about environmental issues, vegetable gardens etc. We hope to run garden competitions between the schools," Buff said.

The existing herb garden is to be updated and herbs used by traditional healers added.

Southern Council parks spokesman Martiens Wilken said his department was waiting for funding before embarking on a street tree planting project in Soweto and Ennerdale.

"We want to create community parks in each suburb which will include open spaces and more formal parks. Residents can help green the inner city by planting flowers and shrubs on their balconies.

"Council will clean up the existing parks and fencing them is being looked at. Maintaining them is a problem because we need to control the invader plants which have taken over. To get our city parks healthy will take three to four years," Wilken said.

In the north, a regular grass cutting programme has been implemented and the council recently completed an upgrade of the Pimville golf course and turfed two soccer fields in Diepkloof.

"Three parks have been created in Pimville as part of our greening programme," said Molwane Lephunya, the strategic executive of community services.

Parks board slow to hold probe

Star 17/4/98 (56)

Mpumalanga MEC last week ordered inquiry into alleged irregularities

SAPA
Nelspruit

The Mpumalanga Parks Board will consider establishing an internal investigation committee into its chief executive officer Alan Gray only at the first meeting of its new board next week, board chairman Francis Legodi said yesterday.

The investigation into Gray was ordered by provincial Environmental Affairs MEC David Mkhwanazi last week after the release of a damning special audit report by the auditor-general, African Eye News Service reported.

The report confirmed earlier press claims that Gray had contracted his own helicopter company to the MPB on 17 different occasions for a bill of R1,2-million without sufficiently detailed motivations that this was the cheapest way to travel.

Gray was also criticised for allegedly failing to declare that he and his wife were co-directors of a travel agency that was paid R520 000 by the MPB for bookings and other facilitation services.

Other alleged shortcomings highlighted in the report include payments totalling R5,6-million, including R1,3-million to a computer company for incompatible computers, without the proper source documentation.

The auditor-general noted that Mkhwanazi had personally authorised some of the expenditure and had also booked several of the more expensive helicopter charters through the MPB.

Legodi said yesterday that the MPB's new board of directors would meet for the first time next Friday and would not automatically appoint the committee ordered by Mkhwanazi.

"We first have to study the auditor-general's report itself and then decide whether a subcommittee of the board is the best way to probe the alleged irregularities," Legodi said.

He said several options existed but declined to comment further for fear of pre-empting next week's board meeting.

The current board was appointed two weeks ago after Mkhwanazi sacked his most outspoken critics from the previous board, which had publicly clashed with him on a series of proposed dilutions of its managerial and financial autonomy.

Opposition parties in Mpumalanga have also criticised proposed amendments to the Parks Board Act, and have slammed the proposed internal investigation committee as unconstitutional and an attempt by Mkhwanazi to shift accountability away from his office.

Both National Party and Freedom Front legislature members stressed that the auditor-general's report still had to be tabled and that the legislature would then decide how to probe its findings.

Rural poor buy into KwaZulu ecotourism venture

(56)

Nicola Jenvey

DURBAN — Northern KwaZulu-Natal's first community-based tourism and conservation project has been launched, coinciding with the start of construction on the R180m tarred "tourism road" through Maputoland.

The region forms part of the government-identified spatial development initiative for northern KwaZulu-Natal, southern Mozambique and eastern Swaziland.

The R4m, 40-bed Sibaya Lake Lodge is a joint venture between private enterprise and an impoverished rural community and is financed by developer Island Rock, a Danish investor and the KwaZulu-Natal Finance and Investment Corporation.

Sited in a 250ha community conservation area, the project lies on the KwaChitumuzi peninsula on the northern shores of Lake Sibaya, the country's largest freshwater lake.

Island Rock has established a community trust, which the provincial government has issued with permission to occupy to give the trust tenure.

The Manzingwenya community, which owns 50% of the lodge, will share proportionately in the profits and benefit from job creation both during construction and once the resort opens.

Island Rock director Carl Schutte said the project launch was the culmination of five years of talks with stakeholders and extensive capacity building in a community which previously had few job opportunities.

He said due to the private Danish investment, the development had arranged Danish government support for further training and capacity building for the community.

The lodge aimed to offer international service standards with local skills.

He said the intention was to outsource services to the community.

While direct employment accounted for about 25 jobs, he believed there would be numerous smaller businesses mushrooming around subsidiary services, including cleaning, reserve management, guiding, maintenance and transport.

The lodge will be completed by the end of the year and once fenced, the reserve will be stocked with game.

BD 17/4/98

South Africa talks with neighbours to establish transfrontier parks

Star 20/4/98 (56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Southern Africa could have its first transfrontier parks declared before the end of this year.

Negotiations between South Africa and Botswana regarding the Kalahari Transfrontier Park have reached such an advanced stage that officials are hoping to have the deal signed, sealed and delivered by September.

A transfrontier park which spans an area between South Africa and Mozambique could also become a reality as the two countries are expected to sign a co-operation agreement to this effect in the near future.

Minister of Environmental Affairs Pallo Jordan indicated recently that it was expected that, by the end of this year, there would be an agreement between the two countries on the establishment of the Kruger/Banhine-Zinave/Gonarezhou park.

This follows more than 10 years of negotiations between the parties.

The idea for transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs) was initiated as one of the South Africa's most ambitious nature conservation projects, with the sole aim of uniting ecological and cultural territories.

Seven areas have been identified, including the Richtersveld/Ai-Ais area, spanning South Africa and Namibia; the Gariep Peace Park, which stretches along the Orange River; the Dongola/Limpopo Valley TFCA, which will unite South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe; the Maputuland TFCA, which will link the Tembe and Maputo elephant reserves; and the Maloti/Drakensberg, which straddles Lesotho and South Africa.

March Turnbull, development director for the Peace Parks Foundation, which was established as an international partnership to protect the continent's wildlife heritage, said negotiations around the Kalahari Park had initially been held up because no agreement could be reached on a name for the new park.

"Once the agreement is signed it will prove that governments can work together," he said. The agreement will enable tourists to move through the park, from one country to the next, without border formalities.

But while plans for certain parks were in an advanced stage, there had not been much progress with others, Turnbull said.

Most want SA to help with peacekeeping duties

Bonile Ngqiyaza

Sixty-two percent of SA citizens want the country to contribute to peacekeeping duties outside SA, according to the results of a survey published in the latest issue of the African Security Review.

The survey found that Democratic Party and Freedom Front supporters were the least inclined towards the country being involved in peacekeeping elsewhere.

The report said when broken down into racial groups, between two-thirds to 70% of the respondents were for peacekeeping, with blacks at 66%, coloureds 64% and Asians at a "marked high" of 70%.

Whites were the least favourably inclined — with less than half — or 43% of those interviewed, answering in the affirmative.

BD 20/4/98

On the question whether southern Africa should establish its own peacekeeping force provided that the costs were shared by all partaking governments, the survey said almost two-thirds — or 65% — of respondents responded in the affirmative, with only 18% nonaffirmative and 17% undecided.

Broken down into racial groupings, those in favour of SA's involvement were black respondents (67%), coloureds (71%), Asians (71%) and whites (27%).

The report said respondents prepared to participate in a multinational peacekeeping effort on a part time basis, were evenly spread. "Very willing" and "willing" accounted for 15% and 24% respectively, while "very unwilling" and "unwilling" accounted for 17% and 27% of the replies.

The survey concluded that the unwillingness of white respondents to volunteer for peacekeeping and participation in external deployment of the SA National Defence Force could be ascribed to experiences they had with conscription. Also, it said, this might point to a more parochial outlook towards Africa and the world.

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IN THE MATTERS

Kielsen Mini Piling cc - Masters Ref: T2358/97, Ultimate Roadmarking (Pty) Ltd - Masters Ref: R3321/97, S & L Carport Manufacturers cc - Masters Ref: T3855/97

● ALL IN LIQUIDATION ●

Insolvent Estate W S Arnsmeyer - Masters Ref: T2691/97, and per instructions the repossession managers of 3 banks

TRUCKS	RESERVE PRICE
1993 Mercedes Benz 1214 Dropside	R68290
2 X Mercedes Benz 1113 Closed Body	Nil
Isuzu SBR Dropside	R16900
Isuzu JCR Volume Van	Nil
1995 Isuzu 4000D Volume Van	R32000
1995 Mitsubishi Canter Dropside	R19000
Mercedes Benz 2624 Rigid 12T	Nil
1996 AMC 4T Diesel	R34000
2 x Mitsubishi L300	Nil
Isuzu 4000 D Volume Van	Nil
Various Scrap Trucks & LDVs	Nil
MECHANICAL HORSES	
1989 Mercedes Benz 2638 - (Acc Dmge)(no eng.g/b)	R15000
1989 International 9700	Nil
1996 Iveco with hydraulics	Nil
1996 Kenworth K400	R125000
Hino 4x2	Nil
TRAILERS	
1996 Triple Axle Semi	R30000

Call for stricter mine environment policy

Josey Ballenger

BD 20/4/98

A PARLIAMENTARY committee has recommended that enforcement mechanisms be put into place to ensure mines implement their environmental management programmes, and that mines make funds available for site rehabilitation before commencing mining activities.

After a study tour earlier this year of two gold mine dumps in Gauteng and abandoned asbestos sites in the Northern Province, the minerals and energy portfolio committee also said in a draft report last week that communities surrounding mining sites should be consulted by mine management, minerals and energy and other government departments.

John Kilani, Chamber of Mines' environmental adviser, said during the February tour that there were insufficient mechanisms to enforce laws.

Provincial minerals and energy department representatives said, however, they believed that they had enough legal power to ensure implementation of an environmental programme.

Regarding Durban Roodepoort Deep in Meadowlands, Soweto, the committee said a study should be conducted on the health effects (primarily blowing dust) of its slimes dam on nearby schoolchildren. It also recommended the mine "grass" the entire dump — currently 80% is covered — and pave school yards.

The committee also reported the mine has not conducted an assessment of the radiation hazard of its activities, as required by law, and that mine management indicated it would not be able to as long as it was a "marginal" mine.

Durban Deep is in the process, though, of revising its environmental management programme report.

At Grootvlei, near Springs, the closure of several mining operations in the area has caused the mine to pump large amounts of water into the Blesbokspruit, an internationally recognised wetland site and a tributary to the Vaal Barrage, Gauteng's main water source.

The concern is the water contains high levels of iron and salt. Government has paid for an iron-reducing clarification plant and approved a loan for Grootvlei to test desalination technologies.

Nuclear waste debate spills over

CT 22/4/98 (56)

It's hard to think of another area where experts are so divided, facts so disputed and rational exchanges so absent as in the debate that surrounds nuclear technology. In an attempt to calm the storm that always follows the transport of nuclear waste, the Pacific Sandpiper has docked in Table Bay harbour — sans nuclear cargo — on a public relations exercise. JUDITH SOAL went on board.

THE last time a ship carrying nuclear waste travelled around the Cape it was accompanied by gusts of outrage and gales of dismay.

References to its "deadly cargo" were interspersed with calls for then Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan's head for allowing the passage and claims that the ship, the Pacific Teale, had broken its promise to stay out of South Africa's economic exclusion zone.

More than a year later, the nuclear waste carrier Pacific Sandpiper has arrived, cargo-less, in Table Bay harbour, intent on convincing a doubting public that nuclear technology, nuclear energy and the transport of nuclear waste is not only safe but also desirable.

It is difficult to unravel the truth in this climate of contradiction and denial. Are these ships that pass our shores dangerous, why are they so important to the industry and is there anything we can do to stop them?

On the question of safety, the nuclear industry goes to great lengths to assure the world that accidents won't happen. Yesterday they guided groups of cynical journalists around the Pacific Sandpiper, insisting all the way that their safety precautions came as close as damn it to being foolproof.

They showed us the cleaning room, where everyone who has dealt with the radioactive cargo must go to monitor their levels of radiation. "We have never had any leakage in 30 years," boasted third officer Mr Bradley Worthington.

They showed us the 90-ton casks that carry the controversial cargo. These casks, they said, are "virtually indestructible".

They have been tested by being dropped from 30 metres on to reinforced concrete and spikes, roasted over burning fuel to 1 400°C, submerged under 200 metres of water and placed in the path of a 140-ton train, travelling at 160km/h, without being damaged badly enough to cause a radiation leak.

Before being put into the containers that are kept in these casks, nuclear waste is liquified and mixed with glass. The lid is then welded on.

"We use glass to immobilise the radioactivity, because glass is a very passive substance," explains Mr Gavin Carter, the Transport co-ordinator of British Nuclear Fuels, who has flown from Washington DC for this exercise.

Similar attention has been paid to the ship itself.

It has a reinforced double hull — one inside the other — separated by a series of 20mm-thick horizontal steel plates.

"It's like a ship within a ship," said Carter. The crew claimed it would take an "all but unimaginably epic" collision for the inner hull and its cargo to be breached. Even then, the ship is divided into watertight compartments.

It also has two of everything: two engines, two propellers, two gear boxes, two navigational and communications systems and duplicate cabling. There are extensive alarm systems to warn the crew should anything go wrong. It has the latest satellite navigation, tracking and weather routing systems.

"There are six generators, when one would be enough to provide power for the whole ship," said the second executive officer Mr Alaister Wilson.

It has what the promotional material describes as "the ultimate fire-fighting system" — the holds can be flooded with sea water and the ship can still be safely navigated. The ship has enhanced buoyancy to prevent it sinking, "even in the most extreme circumstances".

The company responsible for the shipment of waste, Pacific Nuclear Transport Limited (PNTL) — which has the British Nuclear Fuels Corporation, the French nuclear group Cogema and Japanese groups as shareholders — said it hadn't come within a nuclear hair's breadth of an accident since the transfer of waste started in 1969.

"Compare this all to an oil tanker, where there is just one sheet of steel between the oil and the environment," said Mr Alastair Thomas, PNTL general manager. "If they followed the same precautions we would never have oil spills.

"The risk has been independently assessed and everyone agrees that there is no plausible way that radioactive material will ever be exposed. Even if it was, studies have shown that the impact would be minimal."

But anti-nuclear activists just don't buy it.

"You can make it is as safe as possible, but nothing is foolproof," said Mr Davin Chown of the environmental group Earth Life Africa.

"Just last month, two nuclear submarines collided off the United States. They had all the latest highly sophisticated equipment available, but you can never account for human error.

"Remember, they said the Titanic was entirely safe."

Mr Stephen Law, director of Cape Town's Environmental Monitoring Group, said that even if the chances of a nuclear accident at sea were extremely slim, this wasn't the point.

"Through their fancy engineering they have reduced the dangers, but radioactive material is fundamentally unsafe. They can't say they have eliminated the dangers.

"Also, it's not so much about whether shipping is safe, but whether that's the way we want the world to go. Why should we stand aside while two nations send large amounts of nuclear material half-way across the world, using sea routes past countries that have no interest in this deadly cargo? Did they ask our permission?"

With all the controversy that surrounds the shipment, why does the nuclear industry spend so much money to transport nuclear waste? Well, it depends on who you speak to.

The industry says that what they are actually doing is recycling waste, to make the world a safer and cleaner place. "We must hold the dubious distinction of being the only recycling organisation that people object to," said Carter.

It goes like this: Japan — the biggest user of nuclear fuel — sends its spent nuclear fuels to the UK, France or, to a lesser extent, the US, because these are the only countries with the plants to do this "recycling".

To get there, the waste has to be transported on one of three routes, through the Panama Canal, around our Cape, or around Cape Horn.

After the recycling, in which they say 97% of the waste is made reusable, it is sent back to Japan, requiring another trip around the world. The remaining three percent is then buried or stored in the country of origin.

The no-nukes believe this exercise, which they call "reprocessing" rather than "recycling", is somewhat dodgy.

"Japan now faces a curious contradiction. On the one hand it does not have the capacity to reprocess all its nuclear waste. On the other hand it doesn't have the capacity to deal with the products that it does reprocess, and because of this muddled policy in a country thousands of kilometres away, our coastline runs the risk of catastrophic nuclear contamination," said Law.

Chown took this a step further: "We believe that countries who generate the waste should dispose of it without shipping it around, but of course it is an extremely lucrative exercise for countries in the north to transport this stuff."

Well, perhaps all this explains why the shipments are so important, but is there anything we can do to stop them?

Politicians were accused of not protecting South Africans when Pacific Teale passed the Cape last year. Environmentalists shouted "consent by silence" because the ship was allowed within the country's 200-nautical mile economic exclusion zone.

But according to international law, they had no choice.

Mr Jeff Leaver, the general manager of the SA Council for Nuclear Safety, said there was nothing the government could do, even if it wanted to.

"International law dictates that a country can stop a vessel of this type docking without a safety licence, but it cannot prevent it from passing by. The law recognises that it is safe for these ships to traverse our waters."

Although Carter denied yesterday that the Pacific Sandpiper's visit meant the passing traffic of nuclear waste carriers was about to increase, it is clear that we can expect more visits from the Pacific siblings in times to come.

Is this safe? Probably. Can we stop it? No. Is it desirable? Well, not for us.

South Africa doesn't reprocess — or recycle — spent nuclear fuel. We don't have any policy on how to deal with radioactive waste. So if there are any benefits to be had from transporting waste around the world, we don't get them. But if there are any dangers, however minuscule the risk, they could wash up on our shores.

NO NUKES ARE GOOD NUKES: Demonstrators protested in Cape Town against the Pacific Teale, with its cargo of nuclear waste, when it passed Cape shores in February 1997. They called on the government to ban future shipments. *FILE PICTURE*

Environmental concern over newly licensed casino

Star 22/4/98 (56)

By Cecilia Russell
Political Staff

Months of speculation ended yesterday when the Gauteng Gaming and Betting Board awarded its final two casino licences to Akani Egoli at Gold Reef City, in the south of Johannesburg, and Rhino Hotel and Resort, near Kromdraai on the West Rand.

In February the board gave licences to four applicants – Tsogo Sun Holdings, Global Resorts, Afrisun Gauteng and Emfuleni Safari Resorts/Tortello Investment.

But the final two could not be announced at the time because the board and the Gauteng executive council had not reached consensus on which of the remaining 19 casino bidders would win licences.

The board's chairman, Vincent Maleka, said detailed reasons for the board's decisions would be released once there was agreement from the applicants that "confidential and business-sensitive information" could be divulged.

Spokesman for contender Carlton Add-Ventures, Russell Stevens, said by locating the casinos on the periphery of, rather than in centre of Johannesburg, the board had lost a tremendous revitalisation opportunity to position the city for renewed growth.

Akani Egoli's chairman Solly Krok said the casino's location at Gold Reef City would link Soweto with the southern suburbs of Johannesburg, giving an economically depressed area the impetus for development.

An excited Rhino Hotel and Resort chairman Tso Modise said after the announcement that he would be true to his promise to set up a trust fund for the poorest of the poor.

This application caused a storm of controversy from environmentalists and palaeontologists, because it is located in the middle of the richest palaeontological sites in SA.

Professor Phillip Tobias of the University of the Witwatersrand said: "Although I don't know the details of the area involved I do know that it is very close to the buffer zone surrounding the 11 famous fossil sites – Sterkfontein Valley Sites – which will form one of South Africa's first proposed World Heritage Sites. I only hope the proximity of this development to the Sterkfontein Valley sites will not jeopardise our chances of having this proposal accepted by the World Heritage Centre at Unesco in Paris."

But Modise said yesterday that "in consultation with international experts on the preservation of World Heritage Sites (we have) committed ourselves to play a meaningful role in the management of our invaluable heritage sites in the district." The group intends to appoint an international environmental agency, PLB, which manages Hadrian's Wall in England, to manage the site.

Animal rights activists want legislation passed to curb lab experiments

(56) Star 23/4/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

There is still no law in South Africa which governs the use or protects the rights of animals used in research laboratories, despite years of lobbying by animal rights activists.

Activists say that although a national code of conduct does exist – which stipulates the establishment of ethics committees and the minimum standards for housing research animals – no one is forced to abide by its stipulations.

Alan Rolstone, chairman of South Africans for the Abolition of Vivisection, said the law-making process was still in the "workshop" stage and it would take at least another five years before legislation was passed.

"We do have an animal protection law, but it allows for animal experimentation in the interest of medicine and science," he said.

Barbara Nash, of the National Council of SPCAs, said this week that a governmental workshop would take place next month to discuss whether the existing code should be legislated.

Rolstone said the lack of legislation allowed institutions like Wits University to conduct experiments without anyone being allowed to enter its laboratories to see how the animals were housed and treated.

Department moves to revamp legislation

Josey Ballenger (56)

THE environmental affairs department would probably introduce new legislation to clear up the array of laws which caused confusion about environmental management, a senior department official said yesterday.

Sydney Gerber, chief director of environmental management, said the department was formulating a national environmental strategy and action plan which would "almost certainly involve the drafting of new legislation or the amendment of existing acts to bring them in line with the goals and principles of the new environmental policy".

BD 23/4/98

Government backs down over Rooi Els

ARG 25/4/96 (56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The Western Cape government has backed down from a confrontation and agreed to make available documentation about its controversial decision to allow the development of a conservation-worthy smallholding at Rooi Els.

A High Court application was brought by the Save Klein-Hangklip Association, which is opposing the rezoning and sub-division of erf 324.

The erf includes the near-pristine south-western slopes of the Klein-Hangklip mountain and a rare wetland seepage area on the adjoining coastline.

Initially, provincial officials refused to give the association access to documents relating to the recent approval by Planning MEC Kobus Meiring.

The officials cited an internal memorandum forbidding them to release any documents without a court order.

APPROVED: Minister Kobus Meiring

The association then went to court for an order compelling Mr Meiring to give written reasons for his decision.

They also asked to be allowed full access to the documents.

After initially indicating it would oppose the association's application, the provincial government backed down before the court hearing and agreed to provide the documents.

Association chairman Michael Harris criticised the province, asking why it had been necessary to refuse access to the documents in the first place.

"It is inconceivable that provincial government can use such tactics to put a non-profit community organisation, which is dedicated to conserving and protecting the natural environment of Klein-Hangklip, to the unnecessary trouble and expense by forcing it first to launch a court application," he said.

"This is surely not in keeping with the spirit of just administrative action and transparency."

The association's lawyer is now negotiating the issue of legal costs with Mr Meiring's legal representatives.

■ Mr Meiring, who was not immediately available, has been asked to respond.

Algae routed by salt bombs

(56)

Kommetjie vlei is on the mend

ARG 25/4/98

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WARING

The war against the poisonous algae destroying a major Peninsula vlei is being won after the vlei was bombarded, not by artillery, but by salt.

A helicopter dropped 175 tons of salt into Wildvoëlvlei earlier this month to kill the blue-green algae, which was poisoning mussels at the vlei's outflow on to Kommetjie beach.

But the effects of the poison have not been totally eradicated yet – mussels in the Kommetjie beds are still poisonous, but are not expected to increase in toxicity.

Bill Harding, of the Cape Metropolitan Council's Scientific Services, said: "The project has been enormously successful. The blue-green algae in the eastern basin of the vlei has been almost eradicated."

He said where the algae had died, other desirable algae had already started growing, attracting the birds back to the wetlands.

The project to save the vlei was started at the beginning of the month by a team of environmentalists from the Cape Metropolitan Council and the South Peninsula Municipality and leading consultants.

Its aim was to kill off the blue-green algae by introducing salt into the vlei. In addition to salt being dropped from helicopters, dissolved salt was introduced into the vlei via the sewage works. Sea water was also allowed in through the mouth of the vlei.

Although the algae gave off more toxins when it died, the amount produced was less than anticipated and the bacteria in the water was able to break down the additional toxins rapidly.

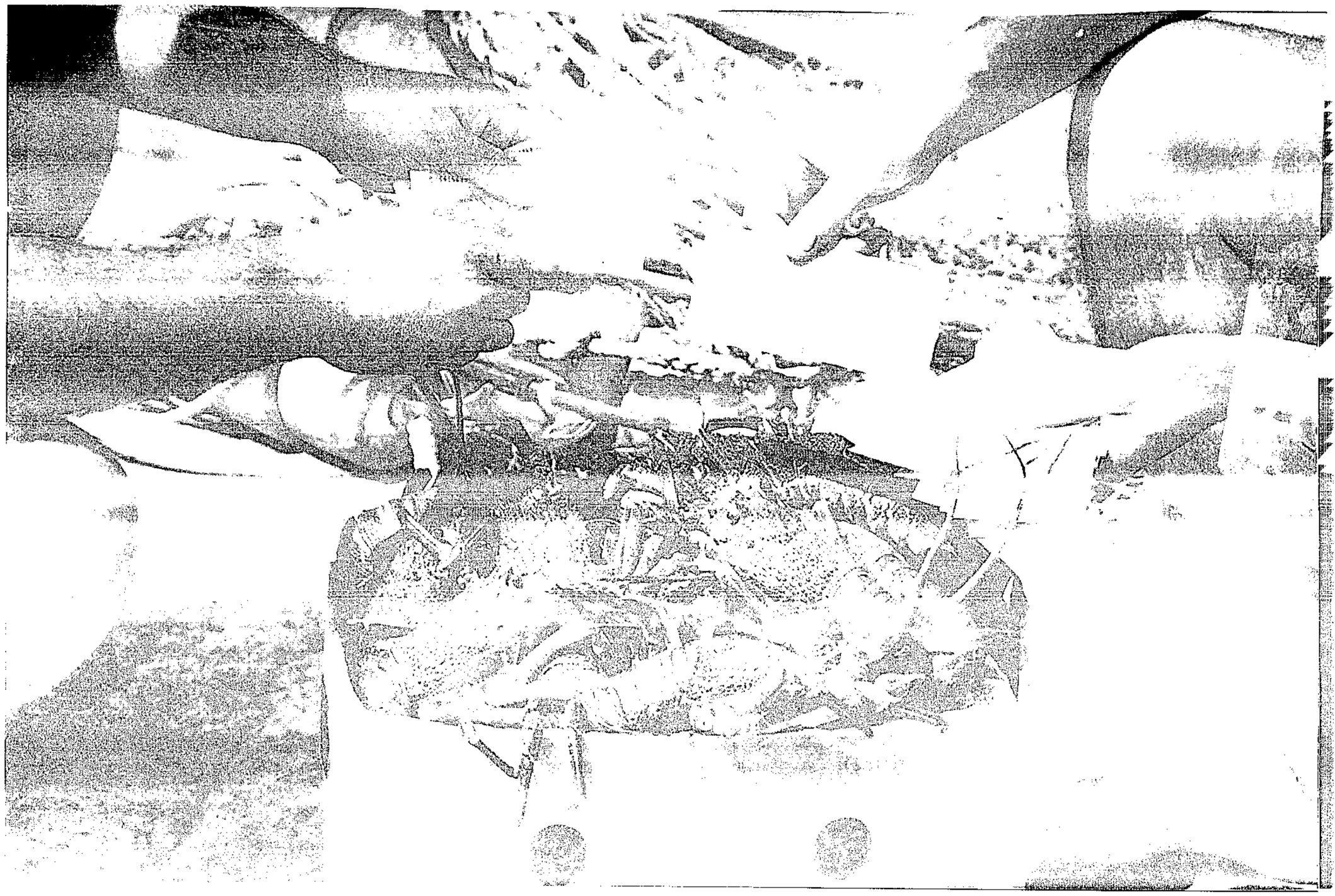
Dr Harding said the toxicity of the vlei and mussels in the nearby sea would continue to be monitored until it was safe for the public to collect shellfish in the vicinity of the vlei outflow.

The channel from the sea to the estuary will be opened again this weekend with bulldozers.

John Wilkinson, a consulting engineer on the project, said: "More than 25 000 cubic metres of sea water flowed into the vlei closest to the sea bringing its salt content up to 60%, enough to start killing off the blue-green algae that had begun to take over the vlei, wiping out all other pond weeds and killing the delicate eco-system."

• He said the channel to the beach lagoon would be kept open to allow sea water to enter the vlei should the ideal combination of tides and weather conditions occur again in the next few weeks.

Close monitoring of the vlei will be undertaken by the Cape Metropolitan Council's Scientific Services Department.



MERCENARY SPOILS: Frustration at the slow passage of legislation aimed at securing marine resources for the poor has helped poaching to flourish. Now, crayfish and perlemoen resources are under serious threat, say experts.

FILE PICTURE

Green values drown in muddy waters

(56) CT 27/4/98

MELANIE GOSLING

THE Constitution promises every South African the right to a clean, healthy environment, but — with the exception of water delivery — analysts say there has been little improvement in the environmental quality of life since 1994.

A major reason is that the Constitution makes environmental concerns a concurrent responsibility of central and provincial governments, without spelling out which tier is responsible for what — leading to confusion and passing of the buck.

A positive step is that environmental policy-making has been participative, with government consulting widely on new legislation. However, there has been little implementation.

Department of Water Affairs:

- Two million of the 12 million people who had no access to piped water in the apartheid era now have access to taps within 200m of their homes.
- Professor Kader Asmal is the first minister to implement a national water conservation campaign, of which probably the biggest success is the Working for Water project. It has employed 40 000 previously unemployed people and cleared water-wasting alien vegetation from vast tracts of land.
- The National Water Bill has totally revised water legislation, taking away individual "ownership" of water and vesting it with the state, making access more equitable.
- Asmal has threatened industry with prosecution for water pollution on several occasions, to which the previous government usually turned a blind eye

Department of Environment Affairs:

- The Marine Living Resources Bill distributes more fairly limited marine resources, taking from the haves to give to the have-nots. But the legislation is taking so long that many people have become disenchanted, leading to an explosion of poaching. Analysts say this has meant that some resources, especially crayfish and perlemoen, are close to collapse.
- Dr Pallo Jordan introduced long-awaited compulsory environmental impact assessments for certain development activities, but the lack of staff and expertise in the provinces — who are meant to regulate the process — means that the regulations can't properly be enforced.
- Jordan signed the Convention on Biodiversity and drew international praise when he halted a housing development which would have caused the extinction of the Brenton Blue butterfly.
- Air pollution has not been addressed, with still only seven national air pollution control officers, and no tighter legislation.
- The department is consulting widely to form a new coastal policy, but the time it is taking has meant that runaway ribbon development along scenic coastlines continues unchecked.
- The public was widely canvassed for input on the new white paper on the environment, but analysts say some sections, laudable in theory, are unworkable — for instance where the department proposes to be able to override the powerful Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs.

Provinces:

- Most of the provincial environment departments are in a state of crisis, some near collapse, with massive retrenchment of skilled staff and huge budget cuts.
- Analysts say central government missed a golden opportunity to insist that provinces standardise environmental legislation. Instead, it has been further fragmented by the formation of nine provinces.
- Most environment departments have inherited bloated bureaucracies from the former homelands, with 300% overstaffing of unskilled posts in some cases, resulting in most of the environment budget going on salaries with little or nothing for operational costs.
- The "brown" issues of waste management and pollution control are meant to be partly controlled by the provinces, but there is no clarity on what they are responsible for, and there is no capacity to implement it.
- The Western Cape environment department had three acting-directors last year and is soon to get its fourth MEC since Christmas. In the last four months, the environment portfolio has been tacked on to finance, then cultural affairs, then community safety. Officials say this has seriously hampered motivation, consistency and delivery.
- The Eastern Cape environment department has lost all 24 of its scientists, and is on the verge of collapse. It inherited huge numbers of unskilled staff from the former Ciskei.
- Mpumalanga told its environment department that it must privatise as it was to be "phased out". This led to the "Dolphin scandal", where the department sold off most of its nature reserves to a foreign company.
- In the Northern Province there has been almost total abdication of responsibility for environmental functions, and the department is near collapse. It has had three different MECs in a year. NGOs have been battling for nearly two years to get the new private nature reserves bill promulgated.
- The Natal Parks Board, which amalgamated with the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources, is almost 300% overstaffed, mainly with unskilled labourers, and almost all its budget now goes on salaries.

Secondary cities suffer from 'squeezed feeling'

Linda Enso (56) BD 28/4/98

CAPE TOWN — Secondary cities like Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and Maritzburg feel squeezed between metropolitan and rural government structures and do not think adequate provision has been made for them in the local government white paper.

That was one of conclusions reached during public hearings on the white paper in Parliament last week.

More than 70 verbal submissions were made and a similar number of written submissions were received, said Yunus Carrim, chairman of Parliament's constitutional affairs portfolio committee.

The hearings were held to give stakeholders an opportunity to influence pending legislation, and contribute to the manner in which the white paper was implemented. The aim also was to inform committee members so that they were better able to scrutinise and process the legislation presented to Parliament. The committee urged secondary cities to set up a forum to promote their interests.

"They feel they bear undue responsibility for the needs of the surrounding rural areas while metropolitan cities keep all their resources within their own boundaries," Carrim said. "They feel a disproportionate share of their resources is dedicated to rural areas."

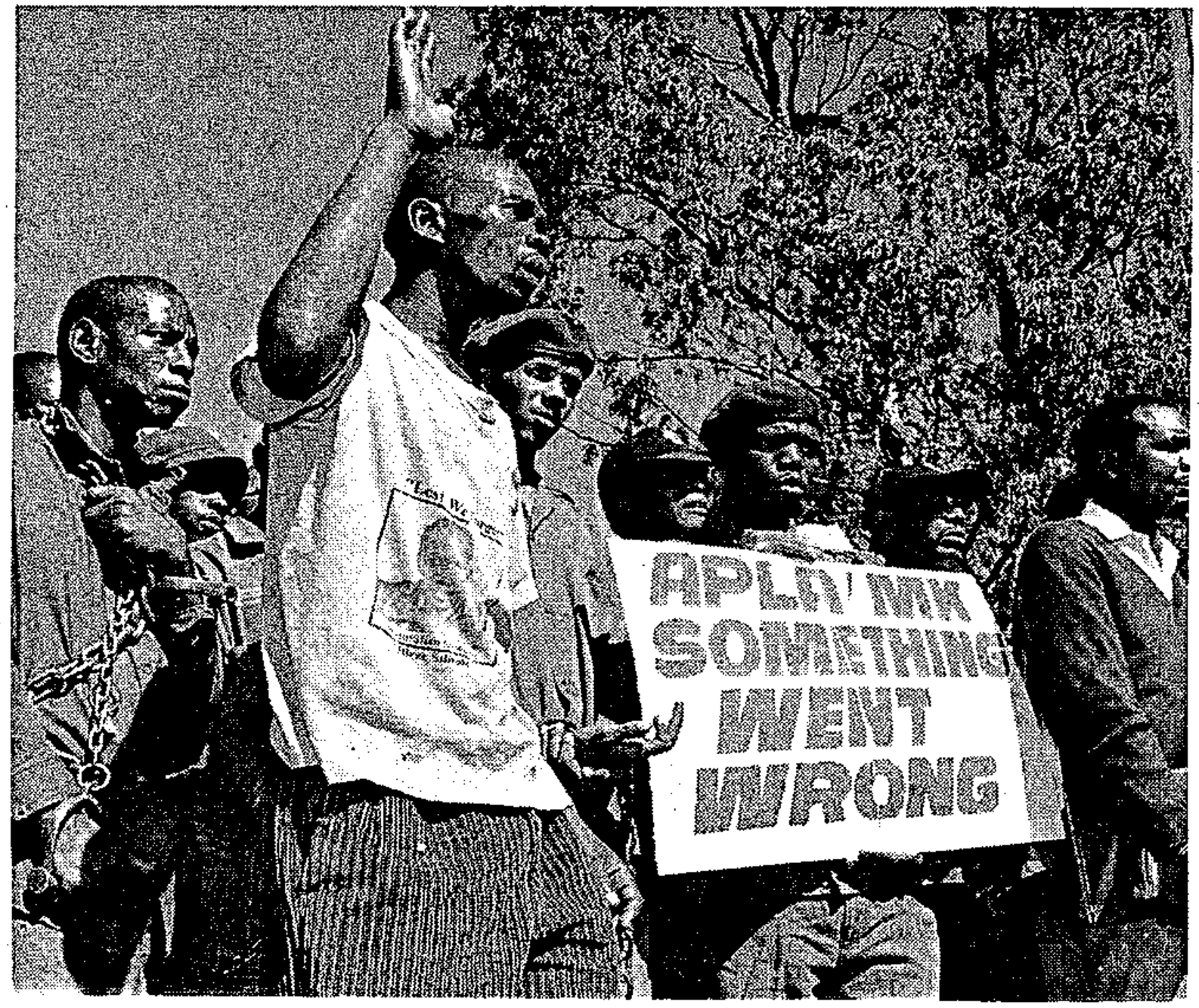
The secondary cities felt dwarfed by metropolitan cities in terms of investment and economic development. Carrim said: "We feel more attention should be given to secondary cities, smaller towns and rural government as a whole."

Another key fact to emerge was the substantial consensus on a broad policy and vision for local government, even on the question of metropolitan government. "If you strip out the political posturing, the differences between the different parties are certainly fewer than you would imagine," he said.

"All metropolitan governments, apart from Cape Town, are fairly consistent in that, broadly speaking, they accept that the current two-tier system does not adequately meet the needs of our citizens and that there is a need to move towards a single-tier system. The committee believes ... it will be possible even to meet the needs of Cape Town within the options of the white paper."

Carrim said the restructuring of local authorities was likely to be phased in over five to 10 years.

The SA Chamber of Business said business, which contributed about two-thirds of municipal revenue, should have a structured voice in local government.



SA industry could benefit from 'greenhouse' accords

Josey Ballenger (56) BD 28/4/98

SA had to face up to the challenge of international environmental conventions, which posed both "benefits and dangers" to industry, a senior environmental affairs official said last week.

SA and other countries classified as "developing" would be pressured to commit to greenhouse gas emissions reductions, even though they were not required to by the climate change protocol adopted in Kyoto, Japan, last December. The protocol set legally binding reduction targets only for developed and former Eastern Bloc countries, which would receive "credits" for helping developing countries reduce emissions.

Greenhouse gases are believed to increase the earth's temperature and thus threaten ecosystems.

"There is likely to be subtle but real trading pressures on countries not seen to be complying to the convention commitments," said Brian Egan, head of the environmental affairs department's international liaison division.

"Trade links may be distorted by potential trading parties which are having to make such cutbacks. There are therefore both economic benefits and dangers in this convention which need to be addressed in many business plans."

Reducing emissions "should have some very positive effects", such as eligibility for funding from the global environment facility for technology transfer and for participation in the programme for "donor" countries to help "host" countries reduce emissions.

Egan said industry was required to provide data on emissions to government. He praised industry for "phasing out ozone-depleting chemicals" through self-regulation and guidance from the environmental affairs department.

More birds and fish die in contaminated Jo'burg dam

Star 29/4/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

(56)

Raw sewage continues to spill into the Blue Dam near Mayfair, Johannesburg, despite efforts by the council to stop it.

Craig Viljoen, spokesman for Eko-care Trust, said more fish had died in the dam over the weekend.

When The Star visited the dam yesterday, the remains of fish and birds that had died as a result of continuous pollution in the dam had been cleared by the council. Sewage could, however, still be seen flowing into the dam from a stormwater drain.

Last week, large numbers of fish and birds began to die, their carcasses rotting in the dam causing a stench.

Russell Rimmer, acting manager of scientific services for the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, said officials had gone to investigate the site yesterday and samples of the water had been taken for analysis.

"The Northern Council has fixed the main sewer leak but is still trying to locate a remaining leak. The difficulty lies with a broken sewer that leaks into an underground stormwater drain. (The pollution) is only seen where the stormwater drain empties into the dam," Rimmer said.

He said council workers would now have to backtrack along the stormwater drain to try to find the source of the problem.

THYS DULLAART

Eyesore and nasal assault ... raw-sewage pollution of the Blue Dam is continuing despite efforts to find the cause of the problem.

Building in

Cape 'out of control'

'Scenic beauty at risk'

ARG 29/4/98

(56)

JERMAINE CRAIG AND JOHN YELD
STAFF REPORTERS

The African National Congress has lashed out at the Western Cape government for creating a planning and development "crisis" which is threatening the scenic beauty of the region and will undermine tourism if allowed to continue unchecked.

The ANC says it has at least 10 case studies which involve non-compliance with legal provisions, among them developments in Knysna, Camps Bay and Silvermine, and unauthorised changes to plans for the Table Mountain cableway upgrade.

It says the National Party-run government has allowed and encouraged disorderly development that is seriously threatening environmental soundness, and accuses it of fostering a general situation of "unjust privilege, unlawfulness, arbitrary actions and stratagems".

Kobus Meiring: 'planning crisis'

It says there is the perception or suspicion by the public "of a high degree of corruption at all levels of the administration as soon as land matters are involved".

The ANC spokesman on planning and trade and industry, Garth Strachan, said the case studies indicated "a clear pattern of arbitrary action by the National Party (planning) MEC Kobus Meiring and his department to lift restrictions, grant exemptions and approve controversial developments against the expressed wishes of affected communities. To compound the crisis, the NP proposes a Planning and Development bill which will take the province backwards and not forwards."

The NP was embarrassed during recent public hearings on the bill when all six local authorities in the metropolitan area – five of which have NP majorities – rejected it in its present form as unconstitutional.

Their counsel argued, among other points, that the bill attempted to give the province powers that had been devolved to local authority level in the constitution.

The proposed bill had been resoundingly rejected by the key roleplayers, stakeholders and interest groups concerned with planning and development, Mr Strachan said.

"The bill is unconstitutional, entrenches apartheid planning, and provides a blank cheque to Mr Meiring and his department to do as they wish without checks and balances or taking account of the real needs in the province."

Mr Strachan described land planning and development in the Western Cape as "far from satisfactory".

"There is extraordinary development of luxury housing, hotels and time-sharing in the most beautiful and scenic parts of the province," he said.

"This activity would not be damaging in itself were it not for the fact that this development is done in a disorderly fashion, with complete disregard for existing laws, environmental considerations, restrictions, regulations and land utilisation schemes, under the benevolent and perhaps interested eye of the authorities, municipalities and officials."

In contrast, there was little or no development in the region's informal townships, where standards of living and services were "extremely poor". "It is the absence of proper housing that is conducive to this situation," Mr Strachan said.

At a press conference, the ANC will call for a commission of inquiry into the "planning crisis", for the withdrawal of the bill, and for a task team to draft appropriate laws.

Today's the day for Peninsula park deal

ARG 29/4/98 (5b)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

A DREAM COMES TRUE

But plenty of tough talking lies ahead before the Peninsula is safe for good.

See John Yeld's Inside Story on page 10

After a wait of more than 70 years, conservationists will heave a huge collective sigh of relief tonight when the Cape Peninsula National Park becomes a reality.

The park will come into being when representatives of the Peninsula's three local authorities and SA National Parks put their signatures on a formal Heads of Agreement document.

This will clear the way for parks officials to take over the day-to-day management of the local authorities' conservation land – including the key Table Mountain, Silvermine and Cape of Good Hope nature reserves – initially under a 99-year leasehold agreement.

The Department of Environmental Affairs is on standby with documentation required for the formal proclamation in the Government Gazette, expected within weeks.

The proclamation will release approved international conservation funding of more than R60-million from the World Bank-administered Global Environment Facility, most of which will be spent in the Peninsula.

The new park will be further boosted in coming months by the transfer of significant state-owned properties, including Navy property in Klawer Valley above Simon's Town which is rated by ecologists as one of the most significant botanical "hot spots" in the Peninsula, and much of Devil's Peak.

Leopards taunted with burning cigarettes

A South African company has been implicated in illegal leopard trade, write **John Grobler** *and* **Fiona Macleod**

(56)

M+G 30/4-7/5/98

Delegates from an international conservation agency meeting in Namibia for the past two weeks were shocked when, walking out of a popular bar in Windhoek last Thursday (April 23), they encountered a group of drunken men taunting three wild leopards in a wire cage in a bakkie.

Although their reaction is not on record, they would probably have been much more shocked had they known that the leopards had come from the very venue where they had been meeting — the upmarket Mount Etjo game lodge, property of controversial Namibian game farmer Jan Oelofse.

Members of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) specialist group on the rhinoceros had gathered at Mount Etjo to discuss the future of the rhino. Had they known about the suspicion with which Oelofse is regarded in some conservation circles, it is likely none of them would have slept very comfortably at the lodge.

When the police were summoned late on Thursday night by one of the Cites group — who used their vehicle to prevent the bakkie from driving away — they established that the three leopards had been sold to Stone Safaris, a hunting, tourism and game-capture outfit based in Van Riebeeckstad in the Free State.

The two South Africans who were driving the bakkie, Willem Adriaan Nel and Johan Knoesen, were held over the weekend and found guilty in court on Monday of illegally possessing and transporting leopards. They were fined just R500 each — despite the fact that leopards are listed by Cites as an endangered species.

The commanding officer of the Namibian Protected Resources Unit, "Clarky" McKay, said this week his unit will be conducting further investigations into Oelofse's operations.

Oelofse, a flamboyant figure usually dressed in khaki, with a hunting knife, large Colt revolver and a trademark red bandana, protested his innocence in the case.

Knoesen and Nel, among others, taunted the leopards by tossing burning cigarettes at them "to rev them up a bit".

A veterinarian who treated the animals after they were confiscated said they showed signs of being caged for a considerable time, judging by how damaged their feet were. All three were parasite-ridden and emaciated, and one female was missing two toes, probably as a result of being caught in a gin trap. They have been moved to safety, and apparently have started recovering.

Until the early 1970s, Oelefse was a member of the Natal Parks Board, where he acquired a formidable reputation as a pioneer of game-capturing techniques, as well as for being a bit of a "loose cannon".

Since setting up his private game farm and hunting operation in Namibia, he has become a multi-millionaire and has been accused by conservationists — including Save the Rhino Trust's Blythe Loutit — of being party to unethical hunting practices.

Colonel Jan Breytenbach, founder of 32 Battalion and committed conservationist, said this week Oelofse had a reputation during the 1980s for buying lions from zoos and taking them to his farm to be hunted.

"I had two lion cubs which we had rescued after their mother was shot, called Rufus and Dayan. They were to

Controversial game farmer: Jan Oelofse practices his game-capturing skills on a cheetah

be taken to Oelofse's farm, but when I heard this, I was absolutely the hell in. Conservation [authorities] eventually placed them somewhere ... where they would be safer."

Oelefse told the *Mail & Guardian* he "condemned in the strongest terms the inhumane treatment" of the leopards by Knoesen and Nel.

He explained that he regularly has problems with cheetahs and leopards coming on to his 17 000ha farm and killing his game.

Although he runs a hunting operation, the $2 000 trophy fee he can raise for a leopard doesn't cover the damage they can cause.

After he captured these three subadult leopards, he tried to give them away to various conservation outfits, but none would take them. "Legally, I could have killed them if they damaged my property, but I preferred to give them a chance."

Evidence showed that Oelofse negotiated with the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism last Thursday for export permits for the three leopards. Although the paperwork had not been completed, that afternoon he agreed to the sale of the three cats — at R3 000 a piece — and allowed them to be removed from his farm.

Oelefse said that nothing about the deal was underhand, and the court case had arisen as a result of a misunderstanding.

According to the Cites rules for the export of leopards, the importer has to prove that they will not be used "solely for commercial purposes" and that he is able to ensure they will survive. Leopards exported under Cites rules may not be used for hunting purposes.

"Buks" Steenkamp, owner of Stone Safaris, was not available to answer inquires about what he had intended doing with the leopards — he was out on a hunt, his receptionist said.

The Nat in a spat stymies parks law

KARIN SCHIMKE (56)

ATTEMPTS to provide provincial framework legislation regulating private nature reserves have been stymied by a spat about a National Party member's interest in them.

Mr Pierre-Jean Gerber, chairperson of the Western Cape agriculture, environment and tourism standing committee, last year introduced what he admitted was an "imperfect" private member's bill aimed at involving owners of private land in conservation. As an owner of a few private reserves, he did this in an attempt to "open the debate" and hoped to involve all interested parties in drawing up acceptable legislation. CT 30/4/98

However, he discovered last week that his ownership of private nature reserves clashed with the powers and privileges of members of the legislature. He has decided to withdraw from the committee for the purposes of the bill.

"I was never going to vote on it anyway," he said.

But last week, the ANC's Mr Russell McGregor introduced a motion that the bill be withdrawn completely.

At the heart of the debate lies the pressing land issue. The state can no longer afford to buy land for conservation.

The involvement of private land owners in conserving nature is an idea which can help alleviate the problem.

The bill as it stands is problematic and, at a committee meeting last year, representatives of Cape Nature Conservation indicated their reservations about it but offered to help draw up the proposed legislation to improve on the existing one.

Issues such as development and incentives for creating reserves are some of the sensitive points that would have to be cleared through a process of public consultation. Public hearings about private nature reserves will be held on Tuesday.

CAPE TIMES
★ THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1998

CALLS FOR COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Outrage over Planning and Development Bill

THERE ARE growing calls for the scrapping of legislation which is seen by many as a serious threat to the environment. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

CT 30/4/98 (56)

ENVIRONMENT and residents' groups joined the ANC's call yesterday for the Western Cape's controversial Planning and Development Bill to be scrapped.

At a press conference, the ANC called for a commission of inquiry into what they described as a "planning crisis" in the province, and also for a representative task team to be set up to draw up alternative legislation.

ANC spokesperson on planning, trade and industry, Mr Garth Strachan said: "This bill has met with overwhelming opposition, including from NP councils. It undermines the power of local authorities and gives discretionary powers to the MEC. There is a planning crisis in this province which we can ill afford for environmental reasons, and for addressing the injustices and inequalities of the past," Strachan said.

Mr Andy Gubb of the Wildlife and Environment Society said: "This is the most dangerous piece of legislation we've seen and it should be scrapped immediately. We believe we're heading for a crisis in the Western Cape in terms of the way the environment is viewed by the province," Gubb said.

Non governmental organisations (NGOs) cited examples of where the provincial authorities had not complied with existing legislation, and said the new bill, with increased discretionary powers to the MEC, would exacerbate this.

Ms Alida Croudace of the Redhill Landowners' Association said the province had failed to implement national legislation to protect the Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment at Misty Cliffs in two separate cases, despite appeals from the local community.

A spokesperson for the Atlantic Seaboard Association said they had collected over 1 800 signatures objecting to a development in Camps Bay, but the province had overruled them.

Gubb said the province had overruled the local authority and ignored environmental NGOs by allowing development on steep slopes at Rooi Els.

The ANC released their alternative Planning Bill yesterday, with the following key points:

- The implementation of the national Development Facilitation Act of 1995.
- The promotion of integrated land development, sustainable development, community participation and building the capacity of local authorities.
- The replacement of structure plans and zoning schemes made in the apartheid era.
- Provision for the development of informal settlements and the conversion of informal tenure.

MEC for Planning Mr Kobus Meiring dismissed the claims of a planning crisis in the province as "absolute nonsense".

"To shout down this bill as something from the devil is unfair. We went through the legislation step by step and it is perfectly constitutional. We have no intention of steam-rolling this bill through, and we're consulting far and wide," said Meiring.

"If the ANC has its way, the province will be totally excluded from the planning process. While we support local authorities, you can't allow local councils to take sole authority for all planning in the province. There are bigger and broader ramifications to planning than those at local level."

Citrusdal drinks to 'liquid gold' gusher

Water strike could end shortages

(56) (BOW) ARG 30/4/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

A strike of "liquid gold" – uncontaminated groundwater – on a farm outside Citrusdal could herald the end of water shortages in the town.

The full potential of the strike has yet to be evaluated, but the water in the subterranean reservoir could meet most needs in the economically important Olifants River valley.

And, of even greater significance, research on this unique underground water system could point the way for the sustainable and effective management of the precious water resources of the entire Western Cape.

The strike, 5km outside Citrusdal, is the result of careful geological observation, perseverance, solid technology and the weather phenomenon, El Nino, whose effects are being felt world-wide.

The success story has its roots in 1995, when Muizenberg-based hydro-geological consultant Rowena Hay was appointed by Citrusdal municipality to undertake a preliminary survey of groundwater use, and prospects in the district.

She found it would be easy to drill shallow, low-yielding boreholes close to the town, but that these would not be sustainable. Also, they would add to environmental problems associated with falling water levels in the already stressed Olifants River system.

"What was actually needed was an ecologically holistic analysis of groundwater recharge and movement on a much larger scale," explained Chris Hartnady, Ms Hay's husband and an associate professor in the Department of Geological Sciences at the University of Cape Town.

Using local hot springs such as The Baths as a clue, Ms Hay and her associates proposed a theory of major "hydrotects": geological structures such as faults and fractures within the region's unique

Liquid gold: driller Craig Wilcox in the coffer dam built around the borehole

Table Mountain Group rock formation, which were capable of holding immense amounts of underground water.

But an opportunity to test that theory arose only late last year, when the Department of Water Affairs made emergency funds available for dealing with the possible consequences of El Nino, one of them severe droughts.

"Locally, our last winter was a dry one," explained Professor Hartnady. "In the citrus-farming area of the Olifants River valley, a projection based on the historical rainfall record appeared to show that – for the first time in human memory – the river might cease to flow at the Citrusdal bridge."

Because the town derived its entire water supply from a pump station at this point, the local council moved smartly on an emergency system of extra boreholes,

Ms Hay's report was dusted off and her consultancy was re-engaged to supervise the drilling of new boreholes.

Her choice of drilling location on the farm Boschkloof – relatively far from the town and the main river – and the contracted depth of the boreholes – an unusually deep 300m – raised eyebrows, and many observers were openly sceptical.

"It was a tricky decision, because I considered it important to go for a long-term, sustainable target," Ms Hay admitted.

Drilling began shortly before Christmas, and there was an anxious wait over the holiday season.

But her site selection was fully justified when, on January 10, the drillers hit a large fracture zone at a depth of about 150m.

Water was blown out of the borehole in such volume and under such fierce artesian (natural) pressure that the rig crew battled for several days to control it.

Only then were they able to measure the flow, recording an astounding "blow yield" of 120 litres a second during a standard test. The borehole flowed naturally at between seven and 10 litres a second.

"The water was gushing out at such a rate the drillers were concerned their drilling platform would be washed away," Ms Hay recalled.

Any groundwater with a borehole yield greater than 10 litres a second under the blow test was classified as "high", said Professor Hartnady – "So the Boschkloof No 1 well is truly phenomenal."

Drilling then resumed, but the well soon had to be abandoned because the water pressure was too great, blowing rocks the size of bricks out into the air and preventing the drill bit from engaging properly with the rock face.

"Those drillers really deserve credit for their efforts," Ms Hay said. "And the strike turned into quite a community event – somehow it caught everybody's imagination, and people from the town flocked out to watch."

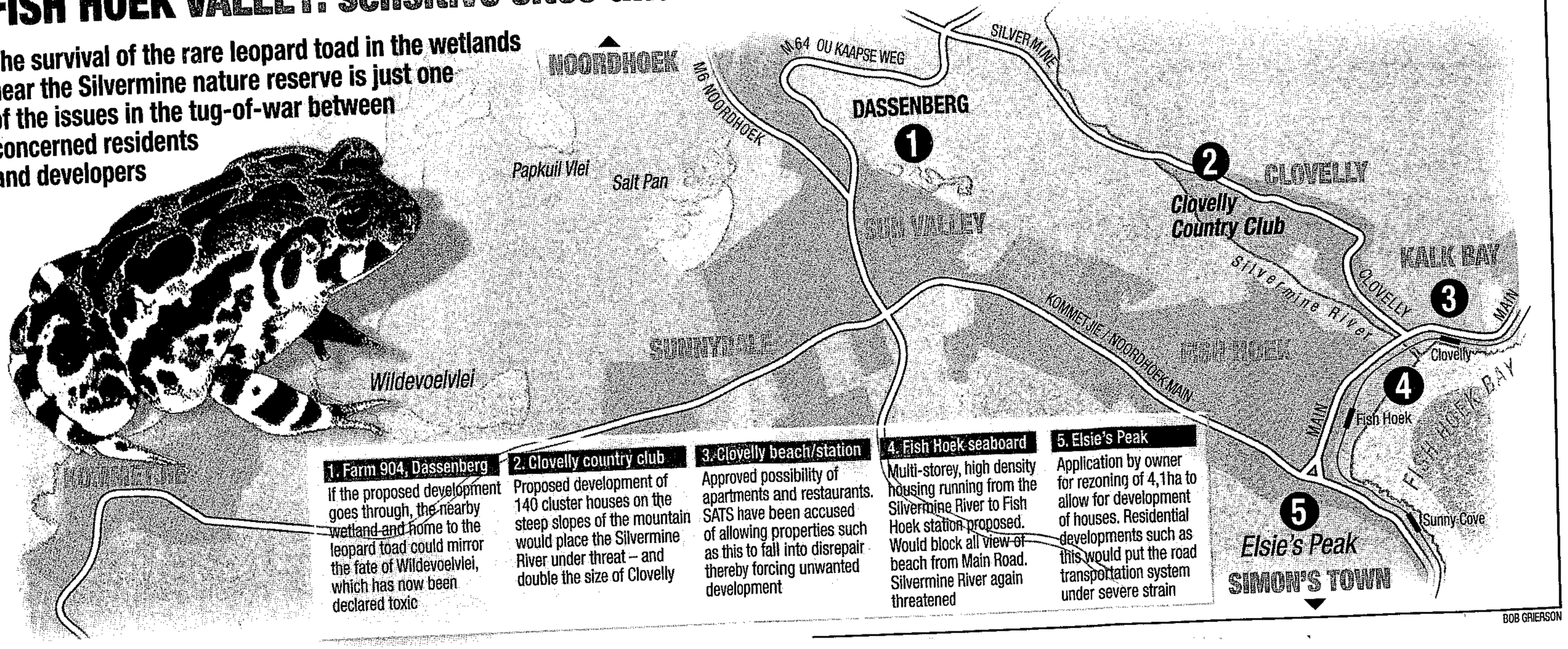
Another four boreholes were drilled, and the next step in the process – taken last week – was to pump three of the highest yielding at the same time for 72 hours.

This was to see how the underground reservoir system would behave when stressed by a large quantity of water being removed.

The boreholes indicated a very extensive regional system of underground water, Ms Hay said.

FISH HOEK VALLEY: sensitive sites under threat

The survival of the rare leopard toad in the wetlands near the Silvermine nature reserve is just one of the issues in the tug-of-war between concerned residents and developers



1. Farm 904, Dassenberg
If the proposed development goes through, the nearby wetland and home to the leopard toad could mirror the fate of Wildevoelvlei, which has now been declared toxic

2. Clovelly country club
Proposed development of 140 cluster houses on the steep slopes of the mountain would place the Silvermine River under threat – and double the size of Clovelly

3. Clovelly beach/station
Approved possibility of apartments and restaurants. SATS have been accused of allowing properties such as this to fall into disrepair thereby forcing unwanted development

4. Fish Hoek seaboard
Multi-storey, high density housing running from the Silvermine River to Fish Hoek station proposed. Would block all view of beach from Main Road. Silvermine River again threatened

5. Elsie's Peak
Application by owner for rezoning of 4,1ha to allow for development of houses. Residential developments such as this would put the road transportation system under severe strain

BOB GRIERSON

Fish Hoek speaks out on developers

(56) ARG 30/4/98

GORRY BOWESTAYLOR

FEATURE WRITER

Developers are again targeting sensitive sites, this time proposing large-scale, high-density developments in Fish Hoek valley.

However, residents' resistance to commercial developments in the pristine, natural surroundings of Fish Hoek is growing.

■ Almost 3 000 Elsie's Peak residents have signed a petition against developing this landmark, where the owner of the plot has previously threatened to build a huge, single structure with up to 16 en-suite bedrooms, staff quarters for eight to 10 people, outbuildings and parking spaces on the steep, 4,1-hectare site.

Vic Kabalin, chairman of the Fish Hoek and Clovelly Residents' Association, said: "Many of the potential developers are rushing into developing these properties along the urban edge of the Fish Hoek valley in order to pre-empt the recommendations that will probably come through from the Van Niekerk, Kline and Edward urban edge study. This is a report to the Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC) on the type of urban edge structures that will fit into the valley.

"The CMC needs to clarify exactly where the urban edge is – they want to phase down environmentally-harmful, high-density housing from that edge.

"On Elsie's Peak, the developers want the municipality to erect a fence with security lighting. It's an unbelievable situation. Can you imagine the impact those lights will have all over the valley?

"We also pointed out that one of the very few regulations that still remain in the Land Use Ordinance is that properties that are going to be constructed must be in keeping.

"We have already said to the council that they must be cautious of allowing all these multiple developments in the Fish Hoek valley when the road transportation system is totally inadequate to cater for the existing population. Boyes Drive and the coast road through Kalk Bay are total disasters over peak periods."

■ Farm 904, Dassenberg – on the road leading to Silvermine Nature Reserve – encircles a wetland which is home to the rare leopard toad.

Even if houses are built away from the wetland, its fate could mirror that of another vlei next to new housing – Wildevoelvlei in Noordhoek – which has been declared toxic.

Sandy Barnes, chairperson of both the Silvermine Valley Coalition and Friends of Silvermine Nature Reserve, said: "The main motivation for the inclusion of this area into the Primary Nature Area is the high visibility of the site from Ou Kaapse Weg, Glencairn Freeway, and from the Sun Valley and Sunnydale areas; the natural vegetation on the site and the proximity of the wetlands.

"The wetlands provide a definitive urban edge for the low-density urban area of Sun Valley and by permitting development, even rural development, on the northern side, this edge would be grossly undermined."

■ On the Clovelly station/beach site, the premier has approved the possibility of flats and restaurants.

Steve Perrett, vice-chairman of Fish Hoek and Clovelly Residents' Association, said: "SATS (South African Transport Services) are at it again, doing what they do best – property development – and they're using the old developer's trick of letting a property fall into such unsavoury disrepair that virtually any scheme would be an improvement.

Clovelly station hasn't seen a cleaner in 10 years, let alone a maintenance team."

■ Intersite would like to cram the property running from the Silvermine River to the Fish Hoek station with multi-storey, high-density housing which would block all sight of the beach from Main Road and cut off the beach from Fish Hoek.

The proposed houses will be built perilously close to the Silvermine River, long recognised as conservation-worthy.

Lewis Walter of Fish Hoek Historical Society: "The proposed housing is said to start 60m from the Silvermine River. In fact within that 60m the developers are putting in a pool, which will require a boundary wall. Sixty metres is a mere smokescreen."

■ Clovelly Country Club further threatens the river by proposing a development of 140 cluster houses, virtually doubling the size of Clovelly. This development also proposes building densely massed structures on the steep slopes of a mountain bordering a protected natural area.

Trevor Webster, long-time resident: "The Clovelly community has a heart and spirit, something you can't quantify in bricks and mortar. My fear is not just overloading the roads, or vandalising the river, it is that the thumbprint of a solitary architect on Clovelly would change the nature of a community. The ethos, the heartbeat."

Meiring scorns ANC claims of Western Cape 'planning crisis'

'Draft Bill will not be steamrollered through legislature'

ARG 30/4/98 (56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Crisis? What crisis?

That's the reaction of Western Cape Planning Minister Kobus Meiring to charges by the ANC that the provincial government has created a planning and development "crisis" that is threatening the environment and will undermine tourism if allowed to continue.

"I think that's absolute nonsense," Mr Meiring said yesterday after the ANC press briefing at which the accusation was made.

Mr Meiring also rejected the ANC's call for the province's draft Planning and Development Bill to be scrapped immediately.

"The bill is far from final because it is so comprehensive and because we're consulting as widely as possible. We are taking our time on this," he said.

Comments on the bill which were made during public hearings of the provincial standing committee last month were now being analysed by the planning department and any constructive criticism would be taken up.

"I think it's totally unfair to shoot down our bill as if it's something from the devil," Mr Meiring said.

"I will under no circumstances steamroller a new bill through our legislature. We've got the numbers to do this but I don't want to politicise this bill. I firmly believe that this province deserves its own unique Planning and Development Bill."

He said the province's legal advisers had gone through the bill clause by clause and were absolutely confident it was not unconstitutional, as claimed by the ANC.

Mr Meiring also rejected charges by conservationists that his government was pandering to developers at the expense of the natural environment and that the bill would exacerbate this.

Earlier, Wildlife Society spokesman Andy Gubb said concerns raised by environmental and civic organisations were often ignored by the province.

"We definitely believe that in the Western Cape the environment is not being given due consideration ... our cries for support and understanding are still falling on deaf ears."

Alida Croudace of the Red Hill Property Owners' Conservation Group accused the provincial government of raising a "smokescreen" by pretending to support green issues.

"(Environmental) laws are not being properly administered," she said.

But Mr Meiring, who had the environmental affairs portfolio before taking over planning in the January provincial cabinet re-shuffle, said he had accepted the counsel of his environmental advisers and planners "99% of the time".

"But I feel very strongly about balance and I will go out of my way to find a happy balance between development and conservation."

Using as an example the development of the Saldanha Bay industrial area – home to the Saldanha Steel and Namaqua Sands projects – Mr Meiring said it was essential for local authorities to appoint "overarching monitoring committees" to oversee developments in their areas.

He also believed there had to be a statutory appeal procedure to a higher authority like the province, as local authorities did not always have sufficient capacity or knowledge to deal with planning and development issues properly.

"You cannot allow a local council to take the lone or full responsibility. There are often bigger and broader ramifications that you cannot leave just to the local people," he said.

Koeberg crisis plan needs upgrade

ARG 30/4/98 (56)

ED WEST
DEPUTY BUSINESS EDITOR

Independent Canadian consultants have found that emergency procedures at the Koeberg nuclear power station need improvement.

And planned urban development in the area around the plant, at Duynefontein, just north of Melkbosstrand, could make matters worse.

The consultants report that considerable infrastructural development, such as improved roads, will be required if emergency procedures are to be adequate for the area's growing population.

Science Applications International Corporation was commissioned by Eskom and the Council for Nuclear Safety to review the Koeberg emergency plan as part of a 10-year re-assessment of the power station.

There are 56 000 people living within 16km of Koeberg. According to scenario planning by provincial authorities, there are plans to establish new urban centres for 473 000 people in the area in 20 years.

"The modified scenario development around Koeberg, in its current state, does not meet the emergency preparedness and response requirements", the report says.

Science Applications director Jeff Lafortune says most areas of improvement related to poor co-ordination between Eskom, local authorities and residents in the event of a disaster. The report foresees gridlock if people attempt to escape the scene of a nuclear accident by car.

The consultants recommend that the main railway line be used for evacuation of the south-east urban area, access be improved to the N7 highway, that additional lanes be built on the N7, that the R27 coastal road be upgraded, and that distribution and reporting points be established north and east of the 16km area so all roads can be used as evacuation arteries.

"We found many organisations are not well informed on their own roles and responsibilities and on (those) of other organisations," the report says.

Dr Lafortune claims the chance of an accident requiring the implementation of the emergency plan is less than one in 10 000 years.

Dispute over controversial planning bill

Linda Ensor (56)

CAPE TOWN — Controversial Western Cape legislation which would concentrate power over planning in the hands of the MEC would not be bulldozed through the legislature and was open to negotiation, planning and administration MEC Kobus Meiring said yesterday.

However, Meiring said there was no way the provincial government, as the elected representatives of the people, could be excluded from the process.

He emphasised that the Planning and Development Bill had not been finalised. All submissions would be carefully scrutinised.

The African National Congress and a range of community and non-governmental organisations have protested that the bill gives the MEC unlimited discretionary power to override the views of local authorities and the public.

Even the National Party-controlled Cape Metropolitan Council was against its provisions, ANC planning spokesman Garth Strachan said yesterday.

Strachan called for the bill, which the ANC believed was unconstitutional, to be scrapped. He also urged the establishment of a commission of inquiry to investigate the "planning crisis" in the province which was threatening its scenic beauty. A task team should also be set up to draft alternative legislation, he said.

The proposed bill circumvented the national Development Facilitation Act, which was promulgated to hasten the demise of apartheid planning. The bill also failed to include meaningful environmental protection measures.

at last Cape gets its national park

ARG 2/5/98 (56)

JOHN YELD

The new Cape Peninsula National Park has become a reality – almost 70 years after the idea was first mooted.

Speaking at the signing ceremony in Kirstenbosch this week, Owen Kinahan, a conservationist and councillor for the City of Cape Town, said the park was a "monument to co-operation" and the result of a superb team effort.

The ceremony was attended by the mayors, councillors and officials of the Cape Metropolitan Council, City of Cape Town and the South Peninsula Municipality, officials from SA National Parks (formerly the National Parks Board), and conservationists. The SA National Parks took control of more than 7 700ha of prime conservation land in the Peninsula, including the Cape of Good Hope, Silvermine and Table Mountain nature reserves.

The park, which will apply to the United Nations for World Heritage Site status next year, will eventually cover more than 29 000ha, once state-owned and private land is included under contracts still to be negotiated.

Referring to a report that the Wildlife Society had suggested as early as 1929 that the Peninsula mountain chain be declared a national park, Mr Kinahan said: "It's been a long wait for rich rewards."

But he also warned that the need to create a sense of ownership of the new park among all South Africans would be a priority.

Stressing the word "national", he said: "To create a 'national' park is probably the biggest challenge."

Park warden David Daitz described the long and tough negotiations between SA National Parks and the three local authorities in the Peninsula to establish the park as "a very difficult process for all those involved".

He singled out for special praise the chairman of the negotiating committee, Cape Metropolitan Councillor David Erleigh, and also acknowledged the contribution of the environmental organisations.

"They played an absolutely fundamental role ... there were many stages where their role was absolutely imperative."

In his address, Mr Erleigh described the new park as being of international importance.

"What we have here is more than a new national park," he said. "With this potential World Heritage Site now under the ownership and curatorship of a responsible, single body, we have ensured the preservation of this national asset and its wonderful biodiversity in its entirety and in perpetuity for the benefit of all the people of the Cape Metropolitan Area, the country and the world. And with close to a million visitors a year, we have no doubt that a real opportunity exists to manage this asset responsibly towards the development of its full tourist potential."

Mr Erleigh said the three local authorities had agreed to make a combined annual grant to the park of R12,5-million for the next five years.

"There would be no point in creating the park were it to be under-funded.

"The premier goal of the park is conservation, but the park must also become commercially viable in the long term."

There would, therefore, be limited – "and, I stress, limited" – economic opportunities associated with the park, Mr Erleigh said.

He appealed for further discussions about the incorporation of the Tokai and Cecilia plantations in the park.

The plantations are currently managed by the state-owned forestry company Safcol, but Mr Erleigh said forestry and logging had no place in a conservation area.

"It is time to open more fully the debate on the future of the Tokai and Cecilia plantations ... [Incorporation] is not a great sacrifice for land that is, in any case, in public ownership."

Mr Erleigh said that job creation in the park was also vital.

Entry fees go up, but season tickets available

An annual family season ticket giving unlimited entry to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve at Cape Point, the Boulders Coastal Park at Simon's Town and the Silvermine Nature Reserve will be available soon.

According to SA National Parks, which took over the new Cape Peninsula National Park this week, the new season tickets, costing R145, will be available no later than July. Season tickets for individuals will cost R75.

In a statement announcing new price structures for the park, the organisation said it was committed to ensuring affordable access to the new park.

It had reviewed the entrance fees at Cape Point, which had remained unchanged since 1995, and had introduced a new tariff structure that would allow entrance concessions for local residents while increasing overall revenue for conservation management.

Tariffs will only be charged in those areas already subject to an entrance fee.

The new adult entry fee for Cape Point is R10, with a minimum charge of R20 a vehicle with 12 or fewer seats. Scholars and pensioners will pay R5.

All entry fees will be halved during the annual "low" season from June to August. For this year only, the low season will include May.

At Boulders Coastal Park, visitors will benefit from a "low season" tariff reduction and will be charged a R5 entrance fee until the end of August, after which the standard R10 charge will apply for the "high" season.

Other new Cape Point charges are: R40 minimum entry fee for vehicles with 13-42 seats; R110 minimum entry charge for vehicles with more than 42 seats; R10 per person daily fishing permit (required for the removal of any marine life); and a R250 annual angling permit, which includes the entry fee.

For more information about tariffs and season tickets, contact the Cape Point information office at 780-9204.

The Skaife and Gold Fields environmental centres at Cape Point and the Sunbird environmental centre at Silvermine are now being managed by SA National Park's department of social ecology.

The centres are primarily for environmental education. For more details, contact the department at 762-9620.

Wild Coast Hole in the Wall falls into ruin

ARG 2/5/98

MIKE LOEWE
In Coffee Bay

(56)

Time is slowly but surely running out for one of the Wild Coast's most famous sights – the Hole in the Wall.

Subtle environmental degradation is under way at an alarming rate on this Eastern Cape coastline, with its amazingly eroded rock formation.

Local hotelier and timeshare manager Howard Schroeder says pollution, degradation of the landscape and depletion of sea life are deeply worrying. But he says nothing is being done about it, and he does not believe anyone is planning to do anything.

He pointed out a large ruin, formerly the thatched headquarters of a conservation officer who was "the most hated man in the area" but who left eight years ago. He says conservation officials rarely, if ever, visit the area.

And a broad expanse of beach is being eroded, allegedly by a local builder, whose two-ton truck removes up to three loads of beach sand a day.

Divers have reported that the seabed area around one of South Africa's most-photographed and most-publicised sea rock formations, the Hole in the Wall massif, is heavily polluted with bottles and other refuse washing down the rivers from Transkei towns and settlements.

Alien inkberry bush is starting to choke the indigenous nearby forests, including a beautiful milkwood glade which was once fenced off and declared a nature reserve.

Further up the coast towards Black Rock, hillocks of indigenous coastal bush which used to dot the area immediately above the shoreline have turned into clumps of inkberry.

Cottage owners appear to be doing nothing about the invasive bush. Instead, some owners appear to be using it as a buffer against the sea winds.

Fencing at the Hole in the Wall reserve has been broken down and cattle graze freely in the former reserve, which is littered with broken bottles and a rusted water tank from one of the cottages. After heavy rain, the Hole in the Wall's refuse tip fills up with water and rubbish washes into a stream and emerges at the Hole.

Locals say that all edible game has been hunted to extinction in the area's riverine forests. Hotel staff say they buy little crayfish from locals, as there are few left.

Last week, foreign fishing trawlers were heard in the bay at night illegally plundering the inshore reef fish.

Local freshwater supplies are polluted and the hotel and timeshare management have put up signs in the rooms stating: "Please do NOT drink the tap water."

Cattle are grazing on the sensitive slopes of Queen's Hill, the tall hill adjacent to the Hole in the Wall headland, and unsightly erosion dongas can be seen from the resort.

There is little law enforcement at the resort and police come from Mqanduli – over an hour's drive away – to respond to crime reports.

HOLE-HEARTED: Howard Schroeder, a new breed of Transkei manager

Nine gunshots were heard last Saturday night in an incident in which a gang of four in a Transkei-registered bakkie had tried to steal a Land Rover in the resort's parking lot – in the process waking up a nightwatchman.

The nightwatchman was stabbed four times and Mr Schroeder rushed him to hospital.

On his return, he caught sight of the would-be robbers' getaway car, parked in a river crossing less than 100m away from a new, but deserted, police station.

He said he fired at the gang, which fled, leaving the vehicle behind.

To make sure the gang did not return for the vehicle, Mr Schroeder shot out two of its tyres.

He said the new police station was built after six foreign tourists were robbed and at least eight cottages in the resort were burgled late last year. However, senior police had told him they had no officers and no vehicle to operate the station.

He said the main problem was the absence of a local authority to regulate the situation. A committee called "The Forum" was trying to offer informal guidance, but the Hole in the Wall resort's two owners refused to take part in it, saying it was racist as it had no whites on it.

They also believed The Forum was doing nothing to stop the construction of illegal cottages – referred to scathingly by Hole in the Wall staff as "1-timeshare".

Mr Schroeder said his staff had started hacking at the inkberry around the hotel and that an incinerator was being bought to minimise the refuse placed on the tip.

He said he felt burdened by the responsibility placed on him by the lack of council structures. "I have been shot at three times in eight months. It can make one feel very lonely." – ECN Weekend Service

Cableway company faces a court battle

(56) STCCM) 3/5/98

CHARL DE VILLIERS

CAPE Town's cableway company is to be taken to court for breaching approved building and zoning plans on the top of Table Mountain, deputy city planner Steve Townsend confirmed this week.

The decision to seek High Court intervention against the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company was taken at a meeting last Friday attended by city council officials, the National Monuments Council and SA National Parks.

It also follows mounting public disbelief and anger at the cableway company's seeming immunity against prosecution despite allegedly blatant breaches of building restrictions on land which is owned by the city, protected as a National Monument and managed by SA National Parks since Friday.

Townsend said the company — which has refurbished the cableway at a cost of more than R60-million and ferried nearly 425 000 visitors to the top of the mountain since October — had not followed agreed procedures or conditions of approval.

"And despite our conciliatory letters and approaches since late last year, we have yet to receive a satisfactory response," Townsend said this week.

"We'll initiate action in court to control them. This is not urgent, so we'll be following the ordinary route in court. In the meantime, we will continue attempts to find a solution that is satisfactory to the authorities."

But according to the cableway's managing director, John Harrison, the council could be on "seriously slippery legal grounds" — and he believes that there is no need to fight over the world-class facility.

Townsend said the offending features included two unauthorised viewing platforms overlooking the north face of Table Mountain, a cocktail lounge in the upper cableway station and "a lot more windows" than originally approved.

The company had also allegedly contravened the zoning scheme by building a restaurant and shop which had not received approval.

Commenting yesterday, Harrison said: "One or two things may not be absolutely according to plans, but the council needs to look at the issues in a far broader context.

"If I've been naughty, they must rap me over my knuckles. But we were building at an incredible rate to put up a world-class facility which international tourists say is stunning."

Endangered butterfly gets breathing space near Knysna

(56) BB 5/5/98

Josey Ballenger

THE Brenton Blue butterfly looks set to escape the threat of extinction with Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan's reapplication of the Environment Conservation Act to secure land for its protection.

Johan Lombard, assistant director of the department's species conservation directorate, said yesterday that Jordan had last week re-invoked section 31a of the act to halt the sale or development of property in Brenton-on-Sea near Knysna for another six months.

This would allow the public works department — which owns all government property — to continue expropriation and compensation talks with the owner of the 2ha site, which would probably be declared a nature reserve.

André Meyering, public works' state property holdings director, said an independent property evaluator would submit his assessment report to the department within two weeks before it was submitted to the statutory land affairs board.

Lombard said cabinet would have to approve the expropriation costs — as yet undetermined — as a special allocation outside the department's budget.

Trustees of the Brenton Blue Trust, a fundraising initiative driven by nongovernmental organisations and Lombard said the reserve would probably be managed by the Western Cape nature conservation department, the local transitional council and nongovernmental organisations to protect the last known population of the butterfly.

Jordan's intervention last year in the Brenton Development Company's proposed development was considered a landmark victory for the environmental movement, as it gave effect to the conservation act and the constitution's environmental rights clauses.

Brenton Blue Trust co-ordinator Conrad Steenkamp estimated the trust had raised between R150 000 and R200 000, which trustee Keith Cooper said would probably be adequate as the reserve would not require "very active" management.

Big steel project's Kruger Park pipeline scheme sunk

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT (56) ARG 5/5/98

Johannesburg – Proposals to transport magnetite by slurry pipeline through the Kruger National Park have been vetoed, but developers have not fully given up the idea of an underground pipeline network – outside the park.

According to an environmental impact assessment (EIA) on the project, such a pipeline, however, would need more than 3 million cubic metres of water each year from Phalaborwa.

The multi-billion-rand Maputo Iron and Steel Project, involving the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa (IDC) and American energy company Enron, involves building a world-class plant to produce 3,4 million tons of steel slab a year for export.

This would draw on magnetite stockpiles from Phalaborwa and natural gas from Pande in Mozambique.

It has been proposed that 20% of the process water discharged by Foskor, the phosphate mining company in Phalaborwa, which is pumped into the Selati River and in turn flows into the Olifants River upstream of the Kruger National Park, be used for the slurry pipeline to transport the magnetite.

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has indicated it will wait for the outcome of a study before considering sanctioning this.

CT(BR) 5/6/98

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

(56)

Nissan SA receives first SABS certification

Nissan South Africa had become the first local motor company to receive the ISO 14001 environmental management certification in one of its plants from the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), Charles Wiggill, the managing director of Nissan SA Manufacturing, said yesterday. Wiggill said Nissan received the compliance certificate from the SABS for its trim plant in Rosslyn near Pretoria. He added that Nissan was one of only a handful of manufacturing companies in South Africa which had received the environmental management certification. — *Roy Cokayne, Pretoria*

CAPE TIMES
TUESDAY, MAY 5, 1998

SEA THE SOURCE OF SULPHUR SMELL

Black tide creating a stink

(56)

ONLY STRONG WINDS can disperse the smell emanating from a rare black tide along the Western Cape coast. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

EVERYONE is complaining about the stench of the red tide and wants to know when it will end.

But the phenomenon that is causing the smell is no ordinary red tide — it is a black tide, only the third recorded in South Africa, and it accounts for the nasty sulphur pong in the air.

Blacker news is that we shall have to wait for the next big blow before the smell goes away.

From Clifton to Gordon's Bay, Constantia to Bloubergstrand and all the way up the West Coast, people have been complaining about the smell and suspecting anything from blocked drains to broken sewerage pipes.

The health department and air pollution control section have been inundated with calls, while people prone to asthma and sinus have telephoned the *Cape Times* to say the smell is aggravating their ailments.

The health authorities say the smell may make people with these ailments uncomfortable, but it does not constitute a health hazard.

The authorities have also given an assurance that there has not been a breakdown in the sewerage system.

They say the smell is from the black tide, a marine phenomenon that is common in Chile and Namibia but rare in South Africa.

A black tide could be described as a red tide that is "rotting".

Red tides are a natural phenomenon and have occurred since prehistoric times.

CT 5/5/98

They are triggered in summer when southerly winds blow the surface sea water offshore, drawing colder water from the deeper parts of the ocean to the surface — an "upwelling".

The deeper water is rich in nutrients. As it is at a level below that to which sunlight penetrates, plants do not grow there and, in contrast to the sunlit parts of the sea, the nutrients are not used up as plant "food".

With the upwelling, tiny cysts of microscopic plants that usually lie dormant on the sea bed are swept up to the surface. When they reach the upper layers, their germination is triggered by the sunlight, warmer sea temperatures and high nutrient levels.

These plant plankton grow and divide rapidly in what is called a "bloom". When the concentration of these tiny plants reaches a million cells or more in a litre of water, it is dense enough to colour the sea, hence the name red tide.

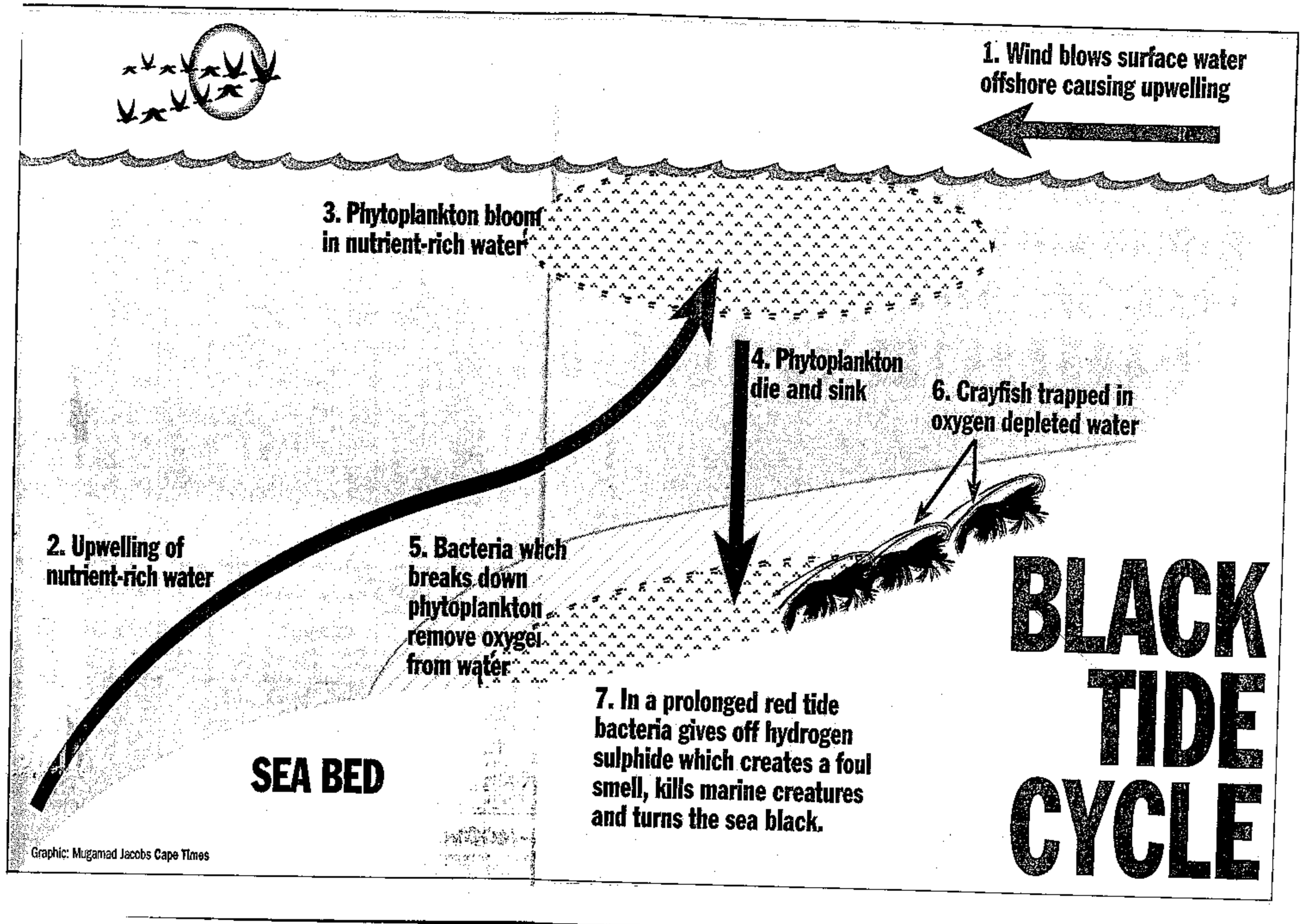
When the plankton die they sink to the sea bed and are broken down by bacteria.

In "devouring" the plankton, the bacteria use up oxygen in the sea. When the bacteria have used up all the oxygen, they draw on sulphur as a substitute, a chemical process that causes them to give off hydrogen sulphide — the smelly gas that has been hanging over the sea.

The hydrogen sulphide turns the sea black, as at St Helena Bay last week, and is toxic to marine creatures.

In a red tide, marine creatures die or are weakened by the lack of oxygen in the water. In a black tide they are poisoned by the hydrogen sulphide.

Sea Fisheries scientists say a strong wind is needed to mix up the sea, disperse the black tide — and dissipate the smell.


1. Wind blows surface water offshore causing upwelling
2. Upwelling of nutrient-rich water
3. Phytoplankton bloom in nutrient-rich water
4. Phytoplankton die and sink
5. Bacteria which breaks down phytoplankton remove oxygen from water
6. Crayfish trapped in oxygen depleted water
7. In a prolonged red tide bacteria gives off hydrogen sulphide which creates a foul smell, kills marine creatures and turns the sea black.
SEA BED
BLACK TIDE CYCLE
Graphic: Mugamad Jacobs Cape Times

(56)

Grand scheme to put sparkle on SA jewel

Star 6/5/98

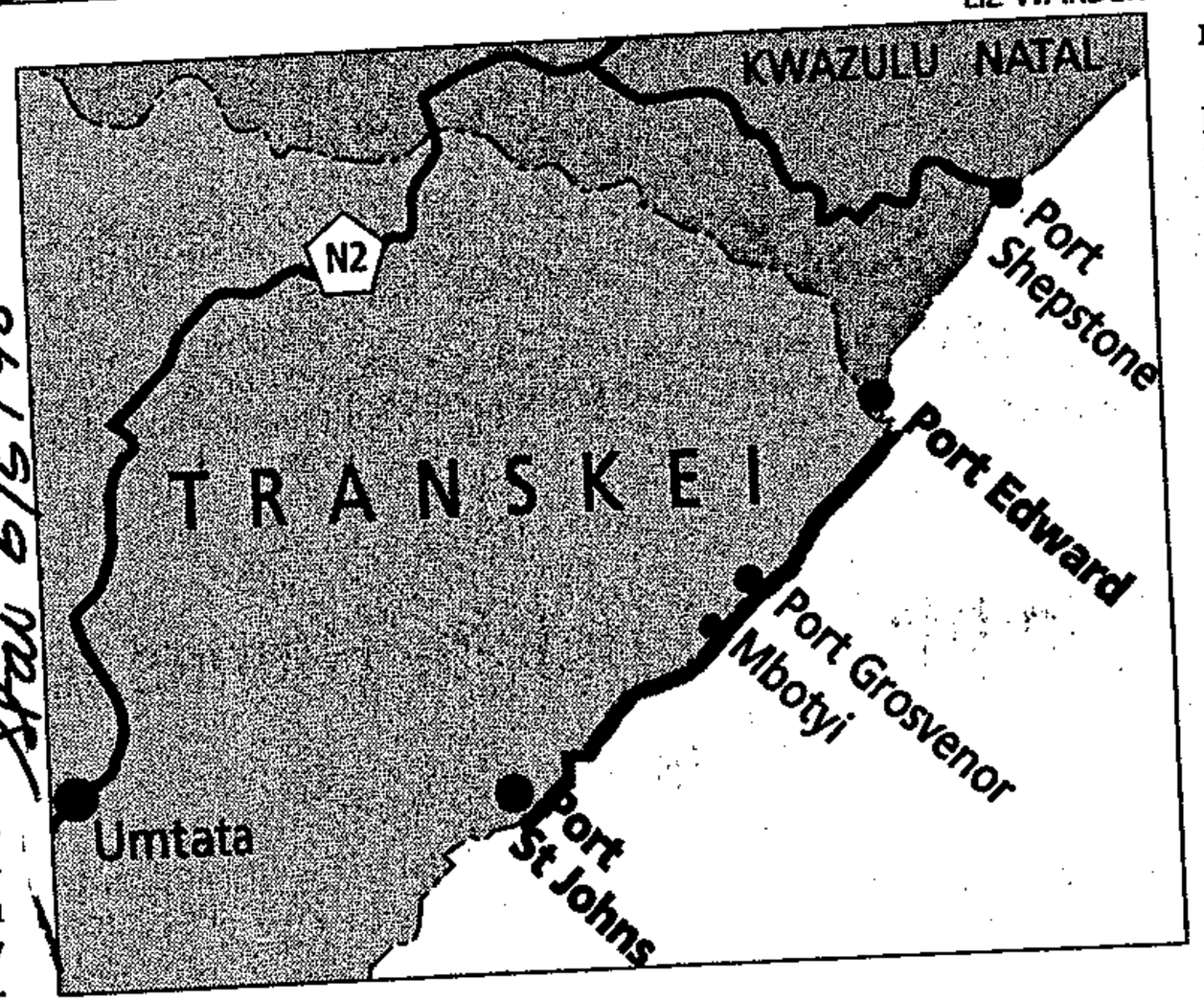
By Tony Carnie

Durban – Ambitious plans have been prepared for a 30 000ha "people friendly" national park along the Transkei Wild Coast – one of the last unprotected natural jewels of South Africa.

The formal proposal for a Wild Coast National Park is seen as one of the most exciting conservation proposals to emerge in decades. It has been drawn up by the Wildlife and Environment Society, which is anxious to avoid the historical "land grab" antagonism associated with the creation of national parks in the past.

Great emphasis is placed on the fact that no people would need to be removed to create the new conservation area. "Any proposal for a national park must involve the early participation and acceptance of the local people in its establishment," the society says in a detailed motivation which has been handed to Environment Minister Pallo Jordan and Maria Mbengashe, senior Eastern Cape secretary for the environment.

LIZ WARDER



SA National Parks and the Worldwide Fund for Nature have also indicated strong support for the project.

The Pondoland Wild Coast, which has the potential to become a major tourist attraction, stretches from the southern KwaZulu Natal border to Port St Johns.

It is an area of magnificent beauty, incorporating clean, unpolluted beaches, deeply incised river gorges and waterfalls and estuaries rich in bird and fish life.

Keith Cooper, the society's director of conservation, spoke of a "new vision" national park, which could bring real benefits to the local people and environment.

The proposal centres on the "biosphere reserve" concept, which aims to promote a balanced relationship between people and their environment.

The core area (such as the existing Mkambati Nature Reserve) has the highest conservation status and is surrounded by a buffer area of low intensity land uses, such as grazing and subsistence natural resource use.

Apart from the fact that no people will have to move, the plan is unique in the sense that it will also not involve any land purchases.

A motivation report prepared by ecological consultant Guy Nicholson says the Pondoland Wild Coast desperately needs the right combination of environmental protection and development.

"This motivation is submitted with a sense of urgency, as this sensitive and vulnerable area is becoming increasingly vulnerable to social and development pressure. The pressure is likely to degrade the area and prematurely foreclose the opportunity to create a valuable national asset, unless prompt action is taken."

The report points to a number of threats, such as uncontrolled development pressure, the lack of capacity in the Eastern Cape nature conservation department, and the exploitation of marine resources.

A task team comprising all relevant interest groups is being formed to take the proposal forward, and the society is hoping to arrange a follow-up meeting with Jordan.

"We would very much like him (Jordan) to endorse our proposal strongly," said Cooper.

Government called on to address asbestos pollution

BD 7/5/98 (56)

Linda Ensor

CAPE TOWN — Government should commit itself to a far-reaching programme to remove asbestos pollution, which was threatening the health of several communities in the country, Northern Cape health official Dr Ahmod Randeree said in a document submitted to parliament's portfolio committee on mineral and energy affairs.

He called on the Chamber of Mines to assist with funding, expertise, equipment and other resources to tackle the problem which caused asbestosis, cancer and mesothelioma.

"There are thousands of South Africans who will suffer from one of these diseases because of exposure to environmental pollution. Even if there is no further exposure, the burden on our health care system will extend well into the next century," Randeree said.

The worst affected lived in the Northern Cape, Northern Province, Mpumalanga and North West, where there were widespread asbestos tailings dumps.

Randeree's document noted that a London legal firm was engaged in bringing a class action suit against Cape Blue Asbestos, "the mining company mainly responsible for abuse of our environment". He called for awareness campaigns and said government should address the health and employment needs of those affected.

"The cost of rehabilitation is not cheap. But, when compared to the long-term cost to society ... clearly it is a cost that has to be met."

Mine health chief director Dick Bakker noted a fall in mine fatalities between 1995 and 1997 from 533 to 424. The department's aim was to reduce this to 295 by 2000. Reportable injury figures had also improved.

Director of fossil fuels and energy Tony Surridge told the committee that the release of the white paper on energy policy, expected yesterday, had been delayed.

EXPOSED: 'WHITE GOLD' LINKED TO CITY COMPANIES

Fish pirates net R500m

CT 7/5/98

'WHITE GOLD': A city crew member with a Patagonian toothfish illegally caught on a "pirate" ship he worked on in the Southern Ocean this summer. The fish are called "white gold" because they fetch around R225 a kilogram.

AN AUSTRALIAN report says Patagonian toothfish are being fished out in the Southern Ocean by fish pirates and local fishermen back its claim that South African firms are involved. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

(76) ~~FISHING~~

TWO city fisherman have lifted the lid on a slick and highly organised fishing piracy operation that earns millions of illegal rands for fishing companies operating trawlers in South African fishing grounds near Antarctica.

The pirate trawlers' target is the Patagonian toothfish, for which there is a market conservatively estimated to be well over R500 million a year.

The toothfish is known as "white gold" because a large trawler can rake in about R20m for a full catch of the fish.

Details of the operation were given by the two fishermen just as Isolfich (International Southern Oceans Longline Fisheries Information Clearing House), an Australian-based conservation trust, released a report on the illegal toothfish trade which implicated South African companies — specifically Cape Town-based companies.

It is estimated that the value of the illegal toothfish industry in South African waters around Marion and Prince Edward Islands in the past 18 months is about $100m (about R500m) — money that should have come to South Africa, but which ended up in poachers' pockets.

It is illegal to fish for toothfish without permits in the Southern Ocean area controlled by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, an international convention which aims to ensure that the marine resources of the Antarctic are not wiped out. South Africa is a signatory to this convention.

The Isolfich report says some of the ships involved in the illegal toothfish trade have strong South African connections, and the French authorities, who recently arrested two pirate fishing vessels, have asked the Department of Foreign Affairs to establish whether the vessels are connected to South African companies.

The two fishermen, Gary and Gert, were recruited by Cape Town company Aluship Pty Ltd and flown to Mauritius, where they joined the fishing vessels.

The Isolfich report describes Mauritius as the "pirate capital" of the illegal toothfish trade, and says the country is using the trade to help finance its new freeport zone at Port Louis.

Gary first sailed on the Antarctico, which was later renamed the Northern Pride. "They change their names so that they can't get caught," he said. "Sometimes they sail as pirates and paint out the names."

Gert, who was also recruited by Aluship and flown to Mauritius, sailed on the Garoya, which, he says, caught toothfish illegally in South African waters around Marion Island.

Gert was also recruited by Aluship to sail on the Praia do Rostello. His pay slip shows that the Praia hauled in 79 tons of toothfish on the first trip and 86 tons on the second. Both catches were landed at Port Louis, in Mauritius.

Illegal trade has strong South African connections — report

Toothfish, which is a delicacy, particularly in Japan, sells for around $45 (about R225) a kilogram.

Spokesman for the French embassy in Pretoria, Mr Jean-Philipe Guiltat, said: "We suspect the Praia is linked to a South African company, and have officially asked South Africa if they have knowledge of this, but so far we have had no response."

The Isolfich report claims to have identified three companies in Mauritius that are involved in the illegal toothfish trade.

The report states: "These are Food Allied Industries Ltd (Fail), including their association with the South African-based Kuttel family, Ireland Blyth Ltd and Happy World Marine. Additionally, we have managed to identify a number of key individuals: The Kuttel family (South African) and Captain Betuel.

"Fail is also linked to the Kuttel family and their company Aluship, through the latter's ownership and operation of the Praia do Rostello. They are large traders in toothfish and generally known to be involved in the illegal trade."

The report said the Kuttels also bought toothfish from the Cape Flower, the Arctic Fox, the Monte Confurco and the Explorer (previously named Krill).

It said the Praia do Rostello, flying the Portuguese flag, was operated by the Kuttel brothers' Aluship company. The vessel had been seen landing toothfish at Walvis Bay and East London in 1997.

The report says the Panamanian flagged Explorer operated in association with Hout Bay Fishing Industries (Pty) Ltd, which also operated the Cape Flower and Arctic Fox.

The Cape Flower and Monte Confurco had offloaded toothfish in Mauritius this year.

Asked to comment on the report, Mr Francois Kuttel of Aluship denied that the company owned the Praia do Rostello, and said it was owned by a Portuguese company.

"We are only agents. We have never bought toothfish from the Cape Flower, the Arctic Fox or the Monte Confurco.

"We were also only agents for the Antarctico, which is also owned by a Portuguese company," Kuttel said.

He said claims in the Isolfich report that Aluship was involved in illegal toothfish

Turn to Page 3

P.T.O.

Residents raise stink over 'untreated' sewage sludge

(56) BD 8/5/98

Josey Ballenger

ALLEGATIONS that sewage sludge deposited on land is not properly treated — and complaints of the related stench by residents in the Vaal area south of Johannesburg — linger as the water affairs department says legal action is "still in the pipeline" regarding past pollution by two East Rand companies.

Water affairs regional deputy director Marius Keet said yesterday that the department was "at the point of taking (completed affidavits) to the police" after laboratory analyses of water samples taken last November showed the East Rand Water Care Company (Erwat) Waterval sewage plant and the nearby Everite Building Products factory had failed to comply with government standards.

Both companies took immediate steps to clean up the "accidental" spills but residents are still complaining that they are "subjected to horrific stenches" emanating from sludge pumped by Erwat, particularly at night and at weekends. The plant has permission to pump sludge onto its land and to plough it in after it has been dried by the sun.

However, David Honer, chairman of the Green Valley residents' association, alleges the sludge is not completely treated.

Honer says, too, a "trench" has carried sludge for more than two months directly into the Rietspruit, a tributary of the Klip River, which flows into the Vaal River, Gauteng's main source of water.

Erwat management could not be reached for comment last night.

Jordan establishes task force to stop the pillage of toothfish

(56)

David Greybe

~~FISHING~~

CAPE TOWN — An interdepartmental task force had been created to act on the pillage of the valuable Patagonian toothfish in the southern Indian Ocean, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan said in Parliament on Friday.

During his budget vote, Jordan said poaching and unregulated fishing of the toothfish around SA's Prince Edward islands was causing "such a loss of earnings to local industry that cabinet has taken notice". A task force had therefore been created.

Up to R800m a year in earnings was lost to toothfish poaching in the southern Indian Ocean. It is estimated that 80% of the 100 000 tons of toothfish caught illegally in the world in the past 18 months have been taken in the southern Indian Ocean.

Jordan said SA had joined with other concerned nations, such as Australia, France, New Zealand and Norway, "in leading global efforts to reduce the pillage in the southern ocean". Australia and France hold sovereignty over other islands in the area.

There were now also reports of SA trawlers pirating toothfish, Jordan said. "These must be eliminated if we are to face the future of the fishing industry with any certainty," he said.

The department had committed "both human and financial resources to addressing the problems that we face in the sphere of law enforcement and patrolling of our exclusive economic zone", Jordan said.

High level meetings between the department and SA Police Service (SAPS) had seen co-operation between sea fisheries officials and members of the SAPS reach new levels.

"We have taken tentative first steps towards putting an end to the blatant disregard for the law that is stripping our country's valuable abalone resources from waters of the Western and Eastern Cape," Jordan said.

Success was critical because, Jordan said, continued plundering of SA's natural resources jeopardised future development opportunities. The department was also engaged in an intensive planning process to address "the critical shortage of funds that keeps our patrol vessels within the walls of harbours around our coast".

The National Party's Wilhelm le Roux said the issue was of grave concern, and "obviously" the department needed extra resources.

Le Roux suggested the department appoint "honorary environmental officers" to assist in the task. "There are literally thousands of concerned citizens who would be willing to help if they are asked to assist and motivated to do so," Le Roux said.

BD 11/5/98

Kruger's curio sellers unite and boost income

BD 11/5/98

BERG-EN-DAL — The familiar bands of curio sellers that line the roads to the Kruger National Park have organised themselves into a high-powered alliance earning R40 000 a month from curio sales.

Elizabeth Mhlongo, manager of the Kruger Park's social ecology department, said at the weekend that the 69 curio sellers initially eked a living on combined earnings of R2 000 a month. Mhlongo helped form the Skukuza Alliance.

"After a six-month training course in business management and after learning skills other than wood carving, the alliance's earnings jumped to R40 000 last month," she said.

The training course was sponsored through a R200 000 donation from national liquor wholesalers, Seagrams South Africa. It was attended by 12 members of the alliance.

"The artists were taught to not only concentrate on making their famous giraffes and wooden masks, but to use other mediums, such as making high-quality leather shoes, and starting bronze casting and weaving," she said. They were are now training their fellow members and the alliance's success had encouraged membership to increase to 500 people.

Asked whether the increase in membership would mean an increase in competition, Mhlongo said the alliance was made up of three smaller associations who sold products at fixed, competitive prices at specific gates to the park.

The former Mhala woodcarver's association and Nyongane arts and crafts group, for example, worked the Kruger Gate near Hazyview. The former Lubambiswano arts and crafts group worked the Numbi Gate, near White River.

Mhlongo said the Kruger Park was also establishing curio shops at its gates where tourists had easier access to the alliance's work.

The craftsmen have been encouraged to interact closely with tourists, by explaining the meaning of the arts and crafts on sale.

"For example, the alliance comprises largely Swazi and Tsonga groups, both of which have different weaving techniques and different use of colours, which can be explained to tourists," Mhlongo said.

"The artists can now present and sell their products with a sense of pride in their own culture," she said.

The alliance's products are now more diverse, the supply and demand is being professionally monitored and proper accounting and stock control systems have been introduced.

Ten percent of the alliance's earnings are used to keep it self-sustainable, while the rest is divided among the members.

"The artists are able to participate in this project without fear of exploitation," Mhlongo said. — Sapa.

Conference to focus on cleaner production

Josey Ballenger

BD 11/5/98 (56)

CLEANER production, the subject of a regional conference this week in Midrand, would be a goal of 21st century policymakers and managers, but the idea had not yet caught on in Africa, the Industrial Environmental Forum said.

"Pollution and waste have very real financial and social costs, so we must focus on preventative strategies and new products, services and technologies," forum manager Karin Ireton said.

"Despite the growing recognition of the importance and benefits of cleaner production, there remains great scope to improve the level of awareness, understanding and implementation of the concept throughout southern Africa."

Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan will open the two-day conference at Eskom's conference centre in Midrand tomorrow with "a government perspective". Jonathan Hobbs of the United Nations environment programme in Paris and Bjorn Stigson, president of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, will lend global and business perspectives. Danish aid agency Danced will discuss pilot projects in southern Africa.

The Industrial Development Corporation and the Development Bank of Southern Africa will discuss funding and the role of financing bodies. Specialists from Europe and Australia will address information exchange in "overcoming barriers".

Memorandum on training

Primarashni Pillay

THE education department has signed a memorandum of understanding with International Partnerships Worldwide, a joint venture consisting of British Aerospace and Loughborough University.

The memorandum details collaboration on the creation of SA skills academies.

Education department spokesman Bheki Khumalo said the academies would seek to establish centres to provide technical and entrepreneurial skills, vocational training and supervisory and middle-management training.

The academies would also create township and provincial technology centres, establish teacher-training programmes and develop apprenticeship programmes for the aerospace industry.

Jo'burg's pollution levels cause alarm

Star 11/5/98

Air impurities blamed for increased allergies, while quality of surface water is said to be declining

(56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Environmental alarm bells are ringing over the state of Johannesburg's air and water, but present legislation gives enforcement agencies only limited powers to deal with the problem.

Earthlife Africa, an environmental agency, has warned that the city's air pollution levels are responsible for the respiratory problems and allergies which have been hitting Johannesburgers.

And rivers such as the Klein Jukskei, and the Sand and Braamfontein spruits, have reached a stage where pollution levels are as high as the Jukskei's was in 1992, sources within the Greater Johannesburg Metro Council have revealed.

The Jukskei is considered to be one of Africa's most polluted, with E.coli counts known to be around 2 million for every 100ml of water. E.coli counts are based on the amount of human faeces in the water and ideally should be well below 250 counts for every 100ml of water.

In its preliminary state of the environment report, the Gauteng environmental affairs department indicated that the quality of surface water in the province is deteriorating, making it less suitable for household and industrial use.

One of the main sources of contamination is the discharge of untreated domestic sewage and runoff from stormwater drains in unserviced areas.

"Although the mortality associated with water-borne diseases such as gastroenteritis, cholera and dysentery is low, the impact in terms of reduced productivity and increased health costs are high," the report said.

Other culprits identified as sources of contamination are waste-water treatment plants for mining and industrial effluent; urban stormwater runoff; as well as seepage from solid-waste disposal sites, pit latrines and septic tanks.

The report said there is very little information available on the concentrations of most air pollutants in South Africa, and Gauteng in particular.

There is also no consistent guidance on air pollution monitoring methods, instrument sitting or even sample analysis.

Richard Worthington, Earthlife Johannesburg's co-ordinator, said there were too few inspectors and no laws that could be enforced to monitor air pollution in particular.

In the report, the department admitted there were "pressing concerns" with regard to legislation on air pollution control.

It said there was room for improvement in the implementation and enforcement of the Air Pollution Prevention Act and that monitoring is not prescribed in the act. There is also insufficient legislation to protect water sources.

Trish Hanekom, the department's director, said the Environmental Conservation Act passed last year insists on comprehensive environmental impact assessment on certain activities before they can get approval. Once in force, this should enable the department to exercise greater control over pollution in the province.

RIAN HORN

The Star ... Monday May 11 1998

Battle to stem dam pollution continues

(56)

Sewage spills into Mushroom Farm dam have been happening for years and show no sign of abating

Star 11/5/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Years of continuous battles to stop the pollution of the Mushroom Farm dam which flows through the heart of Sandton has come to nought as a sewage spill has once again caused serious pollution in the dam.

Sandton resident Mark Falk who has for years been fighting with council said that although they had managed to stop the sewage spill, it would take months before the sewage drained out of the dam.

The stream which feeds the dam starts in the Wierda catchment area, runs into Mushroom Farm, then into Sandspruit River, the Braamfontein Spruit, the Jukskei River and eventually Hartbeespoort Dam.

Last year The Star highlighted the problems at Mushroom Farm and quoted Eastern Metro Council communications spokesman, Keith Peacock, as saying that the council was concerned with the situation and was investigating.

"The matter will be treated with absolute urgency," he said.

It was now more than a year later and the problem has still not been solved, Falk said.

Peacock this week admitted that there has been an ongoing problem at Mushroom Farm "which is related to the sewage piping".

According to Peacock money has been set aside in the 1998/99 capital budget to minimise the possibility of this happening again.

"However, we all recognise that our ability to both maintain and improve the sewage system is directly related to increases in payment levels.

It is highly unlikely that this project can be undertaken in the next financial year, unless we receive sufficient monies from our rate and service base," he said.

After year nothing has been done

Meanwhile, the acting manager of scientific services for the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council yesterday reported that a sewage spill into the Blue Dam near Mayfair has finally been contained.

Eco-care Trust spokesman Craig Viljoen said the surrounding community was now becoming involved in cleaning up and maintaining the dam.

Jo'burg's pollution levels cause alarm

Star 11/5/98

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(56)

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RIAN HORN

1812 Britain's Tory Premier spoke ... 1995 A global conference at the UN ...

Curb development around Koeberg, says safety body

Linda Ensor

BD 12/5/98 (56)

CAPE TOWN — Curbs would have to be placed on the development of communities in the vicinity of the Koeberg nuclear power plant, Council of Nuclear Safety director Jeff Lever told a parliamentary committee yesterday.

There was pressure to develop the area within 16km of the plant in contravention of guide plans, which would interfere with emergency measures for evacuation and sheltering should there be an accident at Koeberg.

"We are concerned that if development is allowed to proceed uncontrolled, there might be problems in the future," Lever said. Property owners might be unable to develop the full value of their properties were controls to be introduced.

The council had conducted briefings with local authorities on how the developments could be controlled, the portfolio committee on mineral and energy affairs heard. Eskom had brought in Canadian consultants to evaluate its emergency plans

Board chairman John Martin stressed the importance of separating the regulatory and promotional aspects of the industry by splitting the Council for Nuclear Safety and the Office for Nuclear Regulation.

The proposed Nuclear Safety Bill provided for this but, after intervention by the Chamber of Mines and the department of mineral and energy affairs in the drafting of the bill, its fate became unclear.

The bill's proposal to set up an independent regulatory body was in line with international conventions. A national strategy on integrated waste management was being formulated by the council and the departments of mineral and energy affairs and environment which would include the management of radioactive waste.

Government would also have to decide how the high level of waste generated by Koeberg, presently stored at the plant, would be stored in future.

Council officials said there was minimal danger of contamination from nuclear waste being shipped along SA's coastline between Japan and France.

Koeberg safety fears threaten development

Plea for tighter control

ARG 12/5/98

The Council for Nuclear Safety has voiced its concern about burgeoning development near the Koeberg power station outside Cape Town, and wants it brought under control.

Further development could prove a problem in the unlikely event of an emergency evacuation of Koeberg, the council's general manager Jeff Leaver told the National Assembly's mineral and energy affairs committee.

"We are taking the whole matter very seriously."

The council was not against development, but wanted it to be properly regulated.

The possibility existed that people with vacant land in the area would not be able to develop their property, Mr Leaver said.

It was likely that "curbs on some communities" would become necessary, unless it could be shown that adequate emergency procedures could be implemented at Koeberg.

Several years ago a plan was formulated to limit development within 16km of Koeberg, but this had come under increasing pressure, he said.

Electricity supplier Eskom, which owns Koeberg, had hired Canadian consultants to look at the development issue and was considering their report.

Mr Leaver said Koeberg was "deemed to be acceptably safe", and while there was room for improvement in controls at the plant, these were not unsatisfactory.

Had Koeberg been located 200 or 300km north of its current location, certain restrictive safety conditions would have been relaxed, council chairman Professor John Martin said.

Bert Winkler, the council's executive officer, said high-level radioactive waste was currently being stored at Koeberg and the plant would have the capacity to store this waste for the next 15 years.

A "political decision" would have to be taken about what to do with high-level radioactive waste in the future.

The Vaalputs disposal facility in the Northern Cape, which is currently licensed to deal with low and medium-level radioactive waste, might be a possibility. – Sapa

Nuclear Safety Bill is delayed

LYNDA LOXTON

PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENT

Cape Town — The parliamentary portfolio committee on minerals and energy was asked yesterday to investigate delays in the tabling of the proposed Nuclear Safety Bill, while concern was expressed about the steady encroachment of housing developments on the Koeberg nuclear power station.

The Council of Nuclear Safety (CNS) told the committee that although the drafting of the bill had developed "satisfactorily", it was not clear what had happened to it after it had been taken over by the department of minerals and energy affairs after the intervention of the Chamber of Mines.

The bill aims to cover safety in the nuclear industry and the monitoring of radiation in mines.

"This is a matter of concern for us, and we would like progress to be made in this area," said John Martin, the CNS chairman.

It is understood that the Chamber of Mines intervened because it objected to plans by the CNS to increase licence fees for the monitoring of radiation waste levels in mines, especially at a time of a declining gold price.

The CNS also said it had been restricted by financial constraints from doing more to educate the public about the radiation dangers of mine dumps and disused underground equipment.

Committee members said they were concerned about plans by some mines to move their dumps closer to Soweto. This posed the danger of a possible repeat of the Merriespruit slimes dam disaster, and local communities needed clear assurance about radiation and other dangers.

Committee members also expressed concern that the guidelines used to limit the development of residential housing around the Koeberg nuclear plant seemed to have been abandoned, mainly because of pressures on local councils to approve lucrative housing schemes and their own need to raise rates and taxes from new developments. This could have serious consequences in case of a disaster.

Jeff Lever, the general manager of CNS, said discussions with local authorities were intended to draft firm agreements on development, even though this would affect the value of land within 16km of the plant.

"There has been pressure to develop ... contrary to the earlier guidelines," he said.

Several committee members complained that security around the plant was still too tight for official delegations from parliament visiting the plant, never mind the public. This contributed to the general misunderstanding about the role of nuclear energy in South Africa.

CNS officials agreed there was a growing need for a firm government policy on the future of nuclear energy in South Africa.

VICTORY HAILED

Morkel turns green as Peers Hill reprieved

(56) CT 12/5/98

THE DETERMINATION of two women won the day. They located the document which sank the developer's application. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THE Fish Hoek dunes have been saved. After a 12-year battle by the green lobby to stop 300 houses being built on the slopes of Fish Hoek's Peers Hill, known as Zone C, the authorities have rejected the application to sub-divide the land for residential purposes.

The move has been hailed as a major victory by the green lobby, which says it sends a message of encouragement to non-government environment groups that they can succeed if they are prepared to work at a cause for years.

This was one of the last decisions taken by Premier Gerald Morkel in his brief term as MEC for Environmental Affairs.

Morkel said he had made his decision after consulting Cape Nature Conservation, which has always opposed development on Zone C, and the National Parks Committee, which also advised against it.

"As a result of the conservation status of Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment, many valuable natural components of the Peninsula have been preserved. What is left of our natural heritage should be protected, and for this reason the application for sub-division was rejected," Morkel said.

Zone C, which is privately owned, falls inside the Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment — land of high conservation value that environment professionals believe should be included in the Cape Peninsula National Park. No landowner may subdivide the land in the protected area without a permit.

The saga started when a developer applied to build houses on the slopes of Peers Hill. There was a public outcry, and the then-minister of environment, Mr John Wiley, turned it down.

He allowed Zones A and B to be developed lower down, on condition Zone C was left undeveloped, and issued a permit to this effect.

In 1991, the developer, who had built on Zones A and B, re-applied to build on Zone C, higher up Peers Hill. The authorities seemed to have forgotten, or could not find the permit that prohibited this.

Indications that authorities would allow the scheme to go ahead caused several organisations to band together under the banner of the Silvermine Valley Coalition to fight the development.

When the coalition reminded the provincial authorities of the "Wiley" permit, they were told that no such permit existed.

But the authorities underestimated the determination of two Fish Hoek women, Ms Sandy Barnes and Ms Kim Kruyshaar, who headed the coalition.

Late last year, after sifting through old documents and following up leads, they eventually tracked down the Wiley permit, which showed that no further housing development could take place.

The NGO says it was this permit that persuaded Morkel to turn down the application.

Barnes said: "I'm thrilled. Finding the permit was probably the most important thing. If I were a dog, I'd wag my tail.

"It's a triumph for green NGOs, and sends a message to them that they can win."

Wildlife and Environment Society spokesperson Mr Andy Gubb said this was "one of the few wins" for the environment.

Mr Paul Britten of the Cape Peninsula National Park said it was "really good news" that Zone C was not to be developed, but he added that he did not think the fight was over yet.

The owner could take the province to court to have the decision overturned.

Mr Bev Mitchell, project manager of the Zone C developers, Fish Hoek Land Estates Co, said: "I can't comment on that (the possibility of legal action). I'll have to discuss it with the owners."

South African company to dispose of Mozambique's toxic waste

(56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Star 12/5/98

Hundreds of tons of stockpiled toxic pesticides in Mozambique will be collected over the next six months for incineration in Maputo.

South African company Wastetech, a division of Enviroserv, has been awarded the contract to treat more than 200 tons of redundant pesticides from close to 40 storage sites around the country.

The stockpiles, including such banned substances as DDT, will be packaged and transported by the company for incineration at Maputo.

Last month the South African Department of Agriculture also announced that more than 800 tons of banned pesticides and redundant animal health products would be collected from farms in the country and shipped to Wales for incineration.

Ken Bromfield, managing director for Enviroserv, said the R12-million project was being funded by a European government agency and that the contract involved the safe packaging and transportation of the chemicals from the storage sites which covered an area of 12 000km.

"The pesticides have been stockpiled over more than 20 years. A lot of the (storage) containers have ruptured and we will have to decontaminate the area and repackage the pesticides," he said.

The work of the clean-up team, however, will be hampered by a number of factors, including the fact that they will be working in temperatures of over 34C.

Because of the make-up of the chemicals they are also restricted to working with it for only one hour a day.

"We are travelling along the worst roads in Africa, and there are landmines in many areas, so we have to be extremely careful which roads to take," Bromfield said.

The company has, however, identified 400 landing strips across the country which can be used to evacuate personnel in an emergency.

Eskom calls in experts over Koeberg

Emergency evacuation plans may not be enough – residents

(56) ARG 13/5/98

NORMAN JOSEPH
STAFF REPORTER

Eskom has called in Canadian consultants to examine residential development in the 16-km zone around the Koeberg nuclear power station because of fears that emergency evacuation plans may not be enough to guarantee people's safety.

Eskom, which owns Koeberg at Duinefontein on the West Coast, expects to get the report soon.

Koeberg is responding to fears expressed by residents of Table View, Melkbosstrand and Bloubergstrand and concerns by the Council for Nuclear Safety.

Blaauwberg municipal planning director Stanley Visser said that although his department wanted to take an independent look at Koeberg's emergency plans, "we don't have land available for sale and no plans for developments".

Mr Visser said an agreement between his municipality and Koeberg required all development plans to be referred to Koeberg for approval.

His department would abide by the requirement that no more than 650 000 people would be allowed to live within Koeberg's 20km radius. Blaauwberg's total population was between 130 000 and 140 000, said Mr Visser.

"We have no plans for development within the 16km zone and there is no land available for sale," he said.

But there were developments under way between Melkbosstrand and Bloubergstrand, including a golf course and 1 200 houses. In the northern parts of Table View, residential developments had been approved in the Kila area.

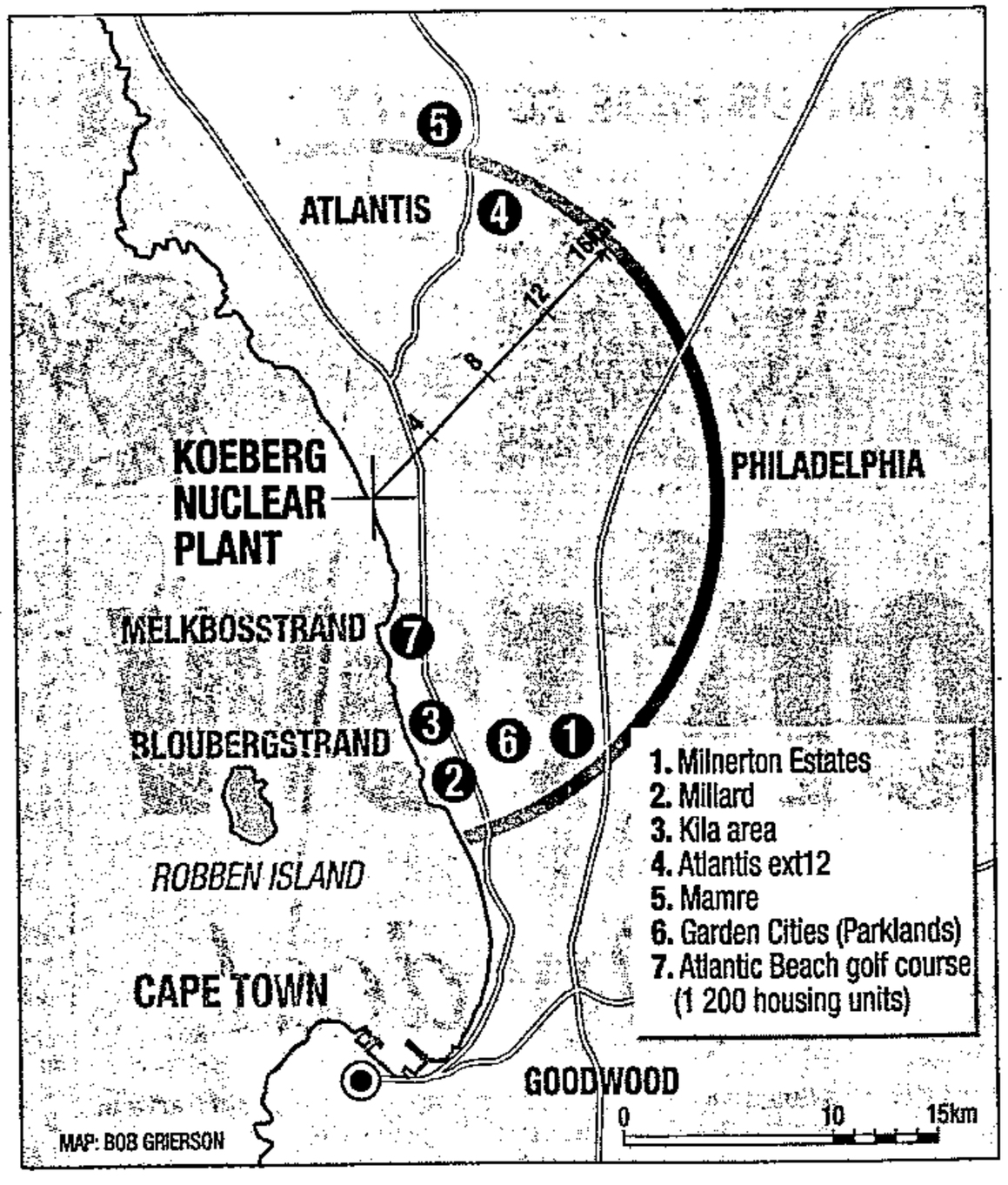
Mr Visser said most property in Bloubergstrand belonged to private owners.

Jeff Leaver, general manager of the Council for Nuclear Safety, told the National Assembly's mineral and energy affairs committee this week that if developments went ahead there could be a problem in the "unlikely event" of emergency evacuation being necessary.

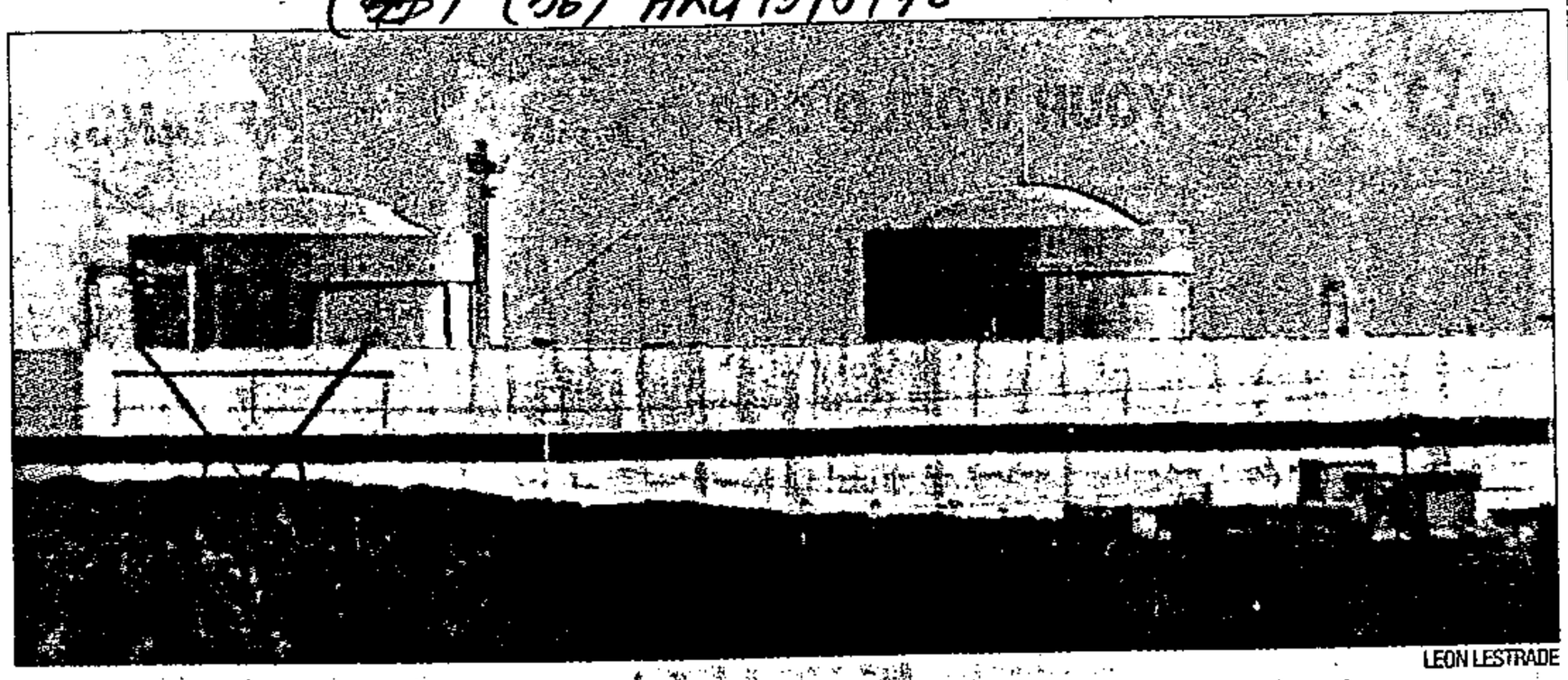
Table View resident Michael Economou and his wife, Tanya Preston, said they opposed developments around Koeberg.

Another Table View resident, Rose Wakefield, said: "I am not supportive of these developments and they must be halted."

Bridget Haefele and Allan John Walker of Table View said they would not support developments in the area because people's safety was being ignored. Emergency plans might not be enough to safeguard residents.



MAP: BOB GRIERSON


LEON LESTRADE

Potential danger: the Koeberg nuclear power station nestles next to Melkbosstrand along the picturesque west coast

Tanya Preston

Rose Wakefield

Allan John Walker

Michael Economou

Bridget Haefele

'Don't increase whaling off SA'

By Russel Molefe

THE effect of any increased commercial whaling off the South African coast, would be the end of a promising eco-tourism industry in the country, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) director Mr David Barritt has warned.

Barritt issued the warning before the 50th conference of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), which will review, among other things, the measures imposed for the protection of some whale species throughout the world.

The conference takes place in Muscat, Oman, from May 16-20.

South Africa is one of the 40 member countries which are represented by a commissioner. Each country has a single vote equal in "weight", regardless of population or economic power.

South Africa, however, is known to back sustainable harvesting of resources to alleviate poverty.

IFAW opposes any form of commercial harvesting of resources, arguing that it may lead to the extinction of species.

"The South African vote is a vote eagerly sought after by whaling nations such as Japan, which has a history of flouting whaling regulations to the detriment of the world's marine mammals," Barritt said.

He said whales have become a popular tourist attraction in towns like Hermanus, where they can be easily viewed from the shore.

"Already the whale watching industry is economically important to communities in South Africa and is likely to become more so because eco-tourism is the world's fastest growing environmental industry.

"This means that the deliberations at the IWC this month have profound long-term implications for South Africa," Barritt said.

He said that should the Japanese and Norwegians get official sanction for increased whaling operations, which they are fighting for, the number of whales coming to breed in South African waters will diminish.

56

Sowetan 13/5/97

'Change in attitude' needed to clean up SA production

BD 14/5/98 (56)

Josey Ballenger

LACK of environmental regulations, enforcement, incentives, corporate leadership or understanding were barriers to "cleaner" production in SA, environmental experts and international agency leaders said yesterday.

Environmental officers, government officials, international experts and corporate managers attending a two-day conference in Midrand said a general lack of awareness of cleaner production, which involves efficient resource use and reduced waste, underscored corporate Africa's lagging environmental performance. They were analysing the chemicals, mining, manufacturing and agro-food industries.

Eugene Cairncross, a senior lecturer at Cape Town's Peninsula Technikon, said it would be a "mistake" for companies to embrace cleaner production only when it made short-term-financial sense: "The cleaner production concept promoted solely on the basis of minimal cost does not represent the change in attitude required. Given the history of conflict in many areas, communities would be rightly suspicious" of the genuineness of attempts under those circumstances.

Rather, cleaner production aims should, as a minimum, meet ambient air, water and other emission standards, and take into account effects on cumulative health and the environment. "Old attitudes see (environmental management) as a separate, incremental activity, not a part of the design process or being at the core of operational procedures," Cairncross said.

Senior officials from international organisations such as the United Nations environment programme said in most cases cleaner production led to substantial cost savings, made companies more competitive and sometimes unlocked unforeseen innovation.

Brian Robinson, chairman of the Environmental Protection Authority in Victoria, Australia, pointed to the example of the Original Juice Company, which saved A$450 000 a year on reduced waste disposal costs and earns a further A$250 000 from selling orange peel, rather than disposing of it.

National Union of Mineworkers official Laura James said sustainable development, including cleaner production measures, should not be undertaken if they threatened employment levels. "But this doesn't mean we will tolerate environmental degradation. We need a vision (that embraces) economic necessity, social desirability, economic viability and which is politically achievable," she said.

How to play the quagga mating game

Cape project releases its first graduates into the wilds of the Karoo National Park

ARG 16/5/98 (56)

ANDREA WEISS

Mariette is about to have a fling with Luke, but Shaun might come between them. Luke is in with a chance because Allen has moved up-country. But it's not clear whether Luke is mature enough to handle Mariette.

This may sound like the plot of a complicated television soap opera, but, in fact, we're talking about the love lives of zebras – and a serious scientific endeavour. Mariette, Luke, Shaun and Allen are all plains zebras, and they are important players in the Cape project to breed the extinct quagga from their close relation, the zebra.

The project has captured the imagination of a wide range of people, from the King of Sweden to the Confederation of Hunters Association of Southern Africa, the main sponsors of the project.

Started by taxidermist Reinhold Rau, the project is into its 11th year and has bred 53 animals that have some of the features of the quagga.

The project took a bold step recently when it moved the first of its animals to the Karoo National Park (among them the stallion Allen), in a visible demonstration of the SA National Parks' commitment to bring back to life a sub-species that was hunted into extinction in the last century.

The project's objective is to breed quaggas so that they can be restored to their original environment, and to right a moral wrong of the 19th century.

Quaggas were a variety of zebra, once common south of the Orange and Vaal rivers. The animals were hunted indiscriminately, and the last mare died in the Amsterdam Zoo on August 12 1883 before anyone realised she was the last of her kind.

It was originally thought that the quagga might be a separate species from the plains zebra, until genetic tests carried out in the early 1980s on quagga tissue samples revealed that the animals were in fact closely related and the quagga was, therefore, a subspecies.

Unlike zebras, quaggas do not have any stripes, except on the head, neck and shoulders. Theories about the different patterning abound. One suggests that the quagga's brownish coats allowed them better camouflage in the desert-like conditions of the Karoo. Another argues that the quagga did not need to protect against itself against the tsetse-fly. (Apparently the tsetse-fly is unable to detect the zebras through their heavy stripes).

Some plains zebras taken from the wild reveal a remarkable similarity to some of the less typical quaggas in museums around the world, indicating that the quagga genes are still floating about in zebra populations.

Only 23 examples of the true quagga remain – stuffed, of course. One is a two-week-old foal at the South Africa's Museum, which was what sparked Mr Rau's interest.

Mr Rau recalls arriving at the SA Museum in 1959 to find the little quagga foal in a neglected state. He was tempted to do something about it, but he was afraid the skin would disintegrate.

Ten years later, he had a chance to experiment with some untanned skins discovered in a wooden box in the museum. He then felt confident to tackle the quagga.

Mr Rau said he went about the task very gingerly, first wetting one hoof, and then slowly working his way up one leg.

After reconstructing the foal, he visited Europe in the early 1970s to look at the remaining examples of quaggas in museums there. In 1974, he published a catalogue of the 23 stuffed quaggas. He has also remounted four other quaggas in Europe – three at the Mainz museum and one in Munich.

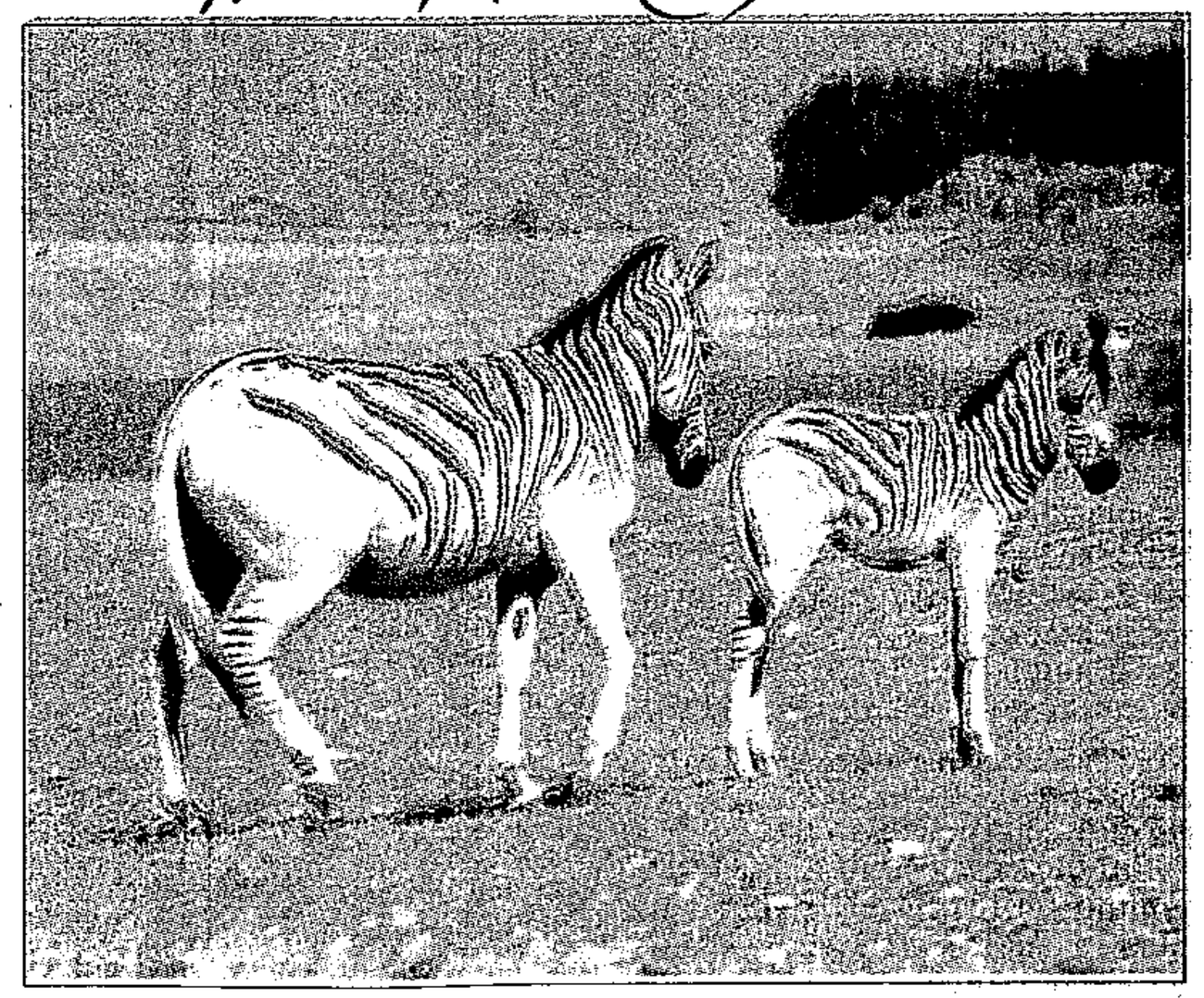
So how close is the project to achieving the ideal quagga? Because there is nothing other than the appearance of the museum specimens to go on, it is unclear whether there are any other typical characteristics, such as habitat adaptations, of the quagga.

Of the 53 animals in the breeding programme, Mr Rau says: "They are better than average zebras and one or two are very good."

Interestingly, two of the best animals (that is with the least striping) were caught in the wild. These animals correspond remarkably well with some of the less typical examples of quaggas in the museums around the world.

"We are concentrating the animals. It is up to further generations to concentrate them even further," says Mr Rau.

"Nobody can say how many generations it will take. A brown foal could be born tomorrow or it could take another 50 years."



OFFSPRING: the first second generation foal from the Quagga Project

Raw sewage 'pumped into Klip by council'

(56) PD 18/5/98

Josey Ballenger

CHARGES have been laid against a Lekoa-Vaal local authority for polluting the Klip River with raw sewage.

The Gauteng water affairs department and local residents have laid charges against the Vereeniging-Koponong substructure, and the department and the Meyerton police have sent "prosecution" water samples to laboratories for analysis.

Henri Pienaar, a water affairs department pollution control officer, said raw sewage had been leaking into the river because of blockages and insufficient pumping in the Meyerton system. The Klip is a tributary of the Vaal, Gauteng's main source of water.

The department laid charges last week with the Pretoria police's protected species unit, while two Meyerton families laid charges with their local station.

Pienaar said the authority had transgressed sections 21 and 23 of the Water Act.

Referring to another area on the Klip where the East Rand Water Care Company (Erwat) allegedly polluted the water, he said: "This is worse than Erwat, because Erwat's sewage is semipurified."

Linda Mngomezulu, Vereeniging-Koponong CEO, did not return calls seeking comment. However, Pienaar said he had spoken to a senior engineering technician who said the council had no money available and was short of pumps — "but they never asked for help". The department responded to complaints from residents that the latest leakage occurred between April 28 and May 8.

Pienaar and area residents said the main station's two pumps were often faulty, resulting in run-off flowing across one of the complainant's land into the river. In addition, a blocked sewage line at a recreational park either had to be pumped out daily by a tanker, or else the effluent flowed into the river.

A Vereeniging ratepayer said: "The equipment is underpowered. The pumps are not big enough and they burn out. The council will probably say they haven't the money to buy the proper equipment, but can anything justify pumping raw sewage into our water?"

Water affairs sources said Meyerton sewage works had been faulty for at least four years and was due to be phased out. Effluent from the area would be diverted to another works.

Tougher action to protect monuments

(56)

Janet Parker

BD 18/9/98

THE National Monuments Council is to decide on more stringent measures to protect against the increasing demolition of historical sites and national monuments.

The most recent sacrifice to modern development, Esher Place, a 1920s home in Sandhurst, Sandton, was razed to make way for a Bakos Property Projects corporate office park development, also to be called Esher Place.

A maximum R10 000 fine or two years' imprisonment can be imposed. However, new legislation could significantly increase the fine for improper destruction of historical property, in some cases to equal the historical value of the property.

Janet de Jager, assistant regional manager for the National Monuments Council's Gauteng region said while Esher Place had not been declared a national monument, it was an historical site, and the council's regulations deemed that any building more than 50 years old was protected.

A permit to demolish the building had been obtained from the Sandton Council, and had "slipped through" as neither the Sandton Council nor the developers had referred the application to the monuments council for a permit.

No decision had been taken on what action to take over the Esher Place demolition. In some previous cases, the council had taken a hard line against developers. In one case it ordered Sanlam to rebuild the historical Leith House, which had been partly demolished during a Sanlam development.

Bakos properties director Dennis Bakos was quoted in the Sandton Chronicle as saying he had applied for the demolition permit from the Eastern Metropolitan Local Council two years ago. However, a spokesman for the local council said neither a building plan nor a site development plan had been approved by the local council which only became aware of the demolition in late March, the report said.

Victorine Howsen, who sold the house to Bakos, was quoted in the same report as saying she sold on the "clear understanding that the house would not be demolished".

De Jager said the whole process between local councils, the monuments council and developers needed to be re-evaluated in order to protect older buildings.

The monuments council would be devolved over the next two years resulting in the regional divisions being incorporated into the relevant provincial government structures. Monuments would also be reclassified according to their historical, cultural, social and aesthetic worth, she said.

A national heritage body would be set up to oversee the national monuments and heritage sites such as Table Mountain and Robben Island.

CAPE TIMES
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 19

Support for change in conservation

(56)

CT 20/5/98

TONY CARNIE

DURBAN: The Wildlife and Environment Society has come out in support of the government's proposed shake-up of nature conservation management, starting with the appointment of a properly qualified environment minister.

The society, the oldest and largest of its type in the country, has also called for a change in attitudes towards conservation.

It has suggested a series of land swops in which national parks with comparatively low conservation value are exchanged for land with higher conservation value that falls outside the protected areas network.

The suggestions are made in a submission to the three-man Kumleben commission of inquiry that was appointed by Environment Minister Pallo Jordan to look into new "institutional arrangements" for nature conservation.

While the society did not comment on Jordan's performance, it noted that the past and present government had given environmental affairs a relatively low priority and inadequate funding.

"Historically, the minister responsible for this portfolio has not been suitably qualified, resulting in a lack of political will and consequent neglect of the environment in terms of policy and funding."

It pointed to Water Affairs and Forestry Minister Kader Asmal as a good example of a minister committed to looking after the environment and getting funds for water conservation.

"If there is political will and commitment, funding will follow, as demonstrated by Asmal," the society said.

The society also said the time was ripe to grant national park status to the St Lucia Wetland Park and the Natal Drakensberg Park.

While both parks are deemed to be of international conservation value, they are controlled by KwaZulu-Natal's (KZN) provincial nature conservation agency.

The society said the former Natal Parks Board (recently incorporated into the new KZN Nature Conservation Service) had been admirable custodians of the two parks for many years.

However, the parks deserved greater national security and recognition.

A central feature of the society's submission was the need to change attitudes on conservation.

"It is vital for the future of our nation that our natural environment is protected — not in the apartheid manner, which fenced off national parks for the enjoyment of a select few, but for the benefit of all."

Society conservation director Mr Keith Cooper said many of the country's nine provincial nature conservation agencies had suffered as a result of budget cuts and voluntary severance packages and SA National Parks might have to step in in certain provinces.

Nature conservation should be a provincial function, he said, noting that provinces were closer to people on the ground and that donors were often reluctant to give funds to state departments.

Oudekraal workers back

(56) (285)

LLEWELLYN JONES
BUSINESS REPORTER

ARG 21/5/98

Work on the Oudekraal hotel has begun again under its new Pretoria-based owners, Court Classique Suite Hotels.

The company's director, Mike de Haast, said they planned to complete the five-star development in time to open for business by the beginning of September.

The multi-million rand project was brought to a standstill earlier this year when the developer, Hottentots Huisie, was liquidated.

Mr De Haast said the completion of the development was being handled by project managers Lurie Yates Partnership.

He would not say how much the company planned to spend on completing the controversial hotel.

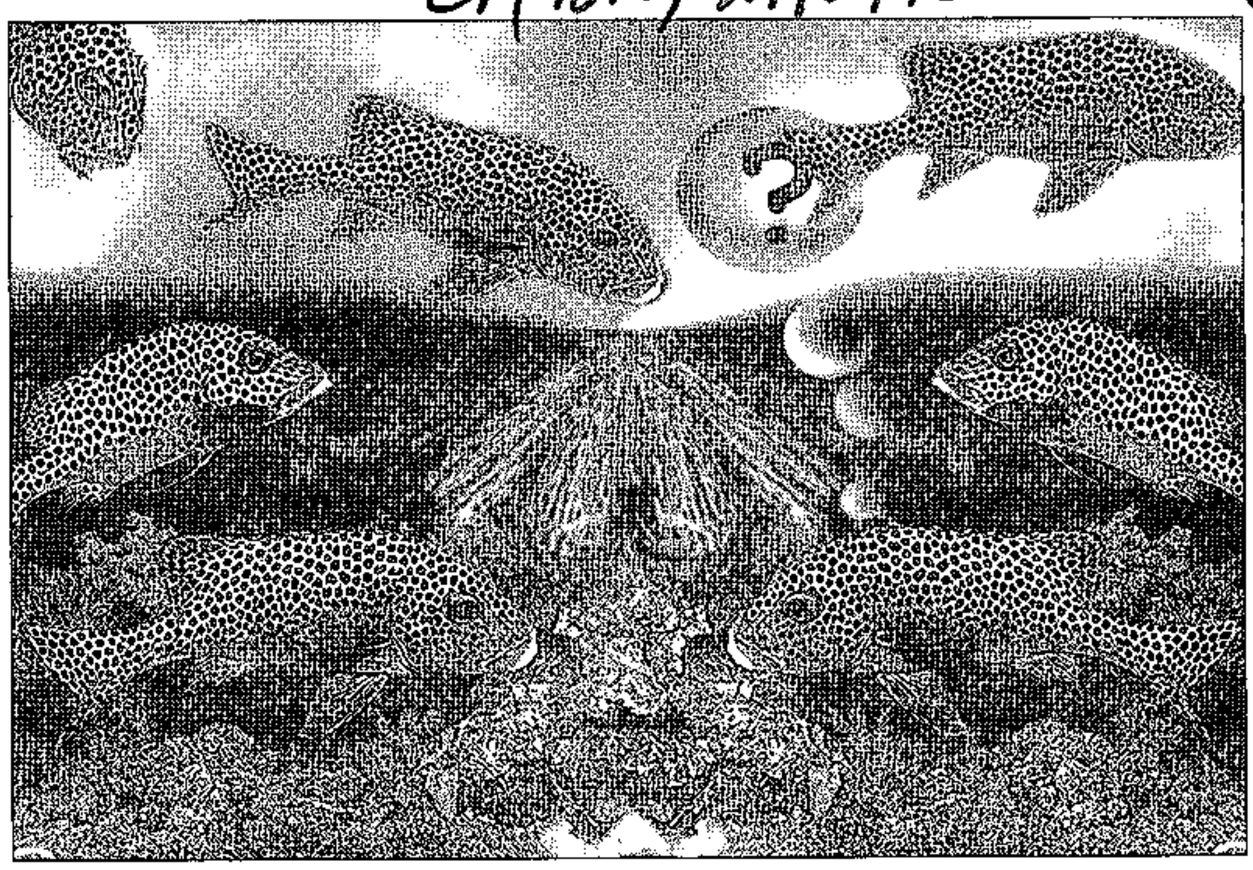
The company already had paid R34,2-million for the incomplete hotel at an auction.

"We don't want to make a splash about how much we are going to spend, but it is millions," he said.

Eco-tourism joins the endangered list

CT (BR) 21/5/98 (56)

SHIRLEY JONES



Drastic measures are needed along the KwaZulu Natal south coast to save two of its most important fledgling industries, eco-diving and sport fishing, from destruction.

Andy Cobb, a diving instructor and ecologist, warned this week that unless urgent action was taken against over-fishing, the problem would be irreversible by 2012.

Subsistence fishermen are bringing in nothing while massive trawlers, many of them foreign, are stripping the coastline of its remaining precious marine resources — only to tip back tons of dead, undersized fish and sharks to avoid losing quotas allocated by the of sea fisheries department. Even large South African trawlers throw back at least 10 percent of their catches.

Local fishermen said they were feeling the effect of prawn trawling off Tugela Banks. For every 100kg of prawns harvested, at least 300kg of other dead marine life was dumped into the sea.

Long line permits issued to trawlers coming in close to shore also lead to the destruction of up to 50 000 tons of marlin a year, according to local communities.

Cobb said in contrast, eco-tourism offered far greater value to those working the ocean and to satellite industries along the shore.

He said South Africa did not have conventional resort diving conditions, but offered a unique adventure experience similar to big five game viewing It was also attracting more and more foreign visitors.

"But, unfortunately, those governing our oceans have always favoured commercial groups to the detriment of the true value of our marine resources," Cobb said.

"Eco-tourism does not mean banning fishing. It incorporates game fishing, but also provides for scuba divers to view beautiful animals such as sharks. Sadly, the once vibrant game fishing industry off the KwaZulu Natal coast is no more and, in the last year, there has also been a drastic and sudden drop in the numbers of shark seen by divers.

"In Kenya, the sport fishing industry virtually collapsed until the Korean trawlers were shunted out. But in Kenya sport fishermen are more responsible, as they tag and release."

Desperate tour guides had given up on the open ocean and were anchoring off reefs so they could guarantee tourists catches, Cobb warned. They were plundering priceless dive spots and spawning grounds and would ultimately destroy their own and others' industries.

Policing the 600km coastline was the responsibility of the KwaZulu Natal Conservation Services, which Cobb described as pitifully under-resourced and understaffed.

It has a staff of just 80 to manage a fishing resource worth over R100 million used by over 200 000 people a year, including about 75 000 rock and surf anglers, 3 500 ski boats, 3 200 spear fishermen, 146 000 crayfish and 262 000 mussel gatherers.

Despite the enforcement of bag limits, size limits and closed seasons, the policing of closed areas and efforts to change the fishing ethic to promote conservation, the number of transgressors continues to grow.

Cedric Coetzee, the chief conservator, coast, for the Conservation Services, admitted to funding constraints. But he said this was no excuse for doing nothing. Last year, 532 admission of guilt fines were issued and 661 people were arrested. Fines totalled R117 000.

He said the Conservation Services could not pay special attention to any single issue. It felt a balance must be struck between the commercial fishing industry, which valued a fish according to sales and consumption, and the eco-tourism industry, which put a price on diving and viewing.

"We must cater for all sectors and establish a sustainable use policy," he said.

Conservationists, the tourism industry and Coetzee said the marine environment already had attracted the investment of hundreds of millions of rand in the development along the south coast. Billions more could be added if the marine resource was carefully managed.

Coetzee said Conservation Services' northern coastal resorts, including Sodwana, Cape Vidal, St Lucia, Charters Creek, Fanies Island, False Bay and Umlalazi, were already its highest earning revenue points.

There is no allocation for protecting popular dive and fishing areas such as Aliwal Shoal and Protea Banks. About a fifth of KwaZulu Natal's coastline is protected marine reserves. In the extreme north, Maputaland and St Lucia, known for coral reefs and turtle nesting beaches, form a single protected area from Mozambique to Cape Vidal.

But the tiny Trafalgar Marine Reserve is the only such area in the south. Estuaries play a crucial role in maintaining inshore fish stocks, yet of the 50 estuaries south of Durban, just one is protected.

Coetzee said the south coast faced a legacy of overfishing from the '70s. Even today, fishing continued to grow. However, the effort put in by fishermen had increased despite a definite decline in catches.

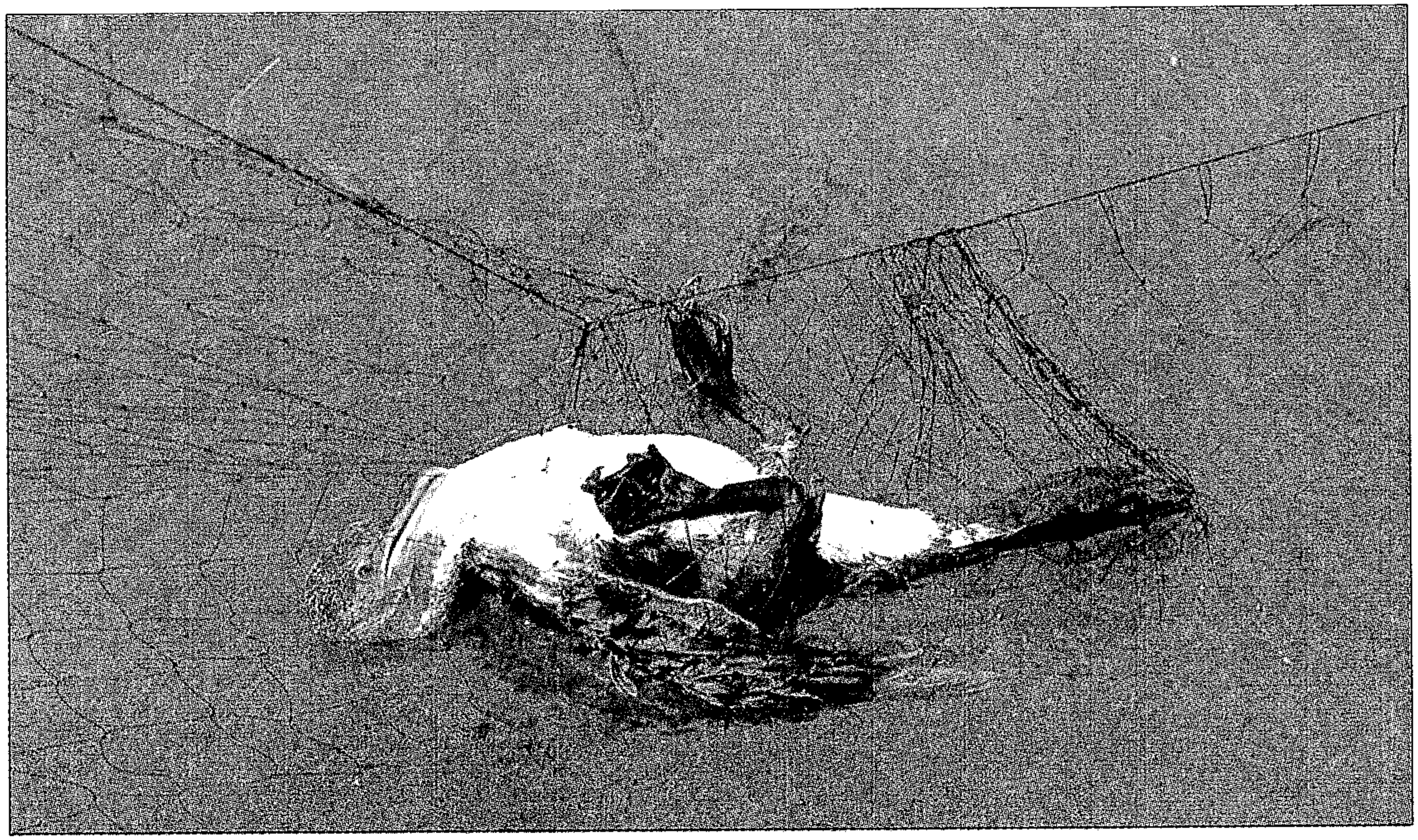
He said Conservation Services would implement a management plan to build up stocks along the country's entire east coast, based on an assessment of 35 species which would soon be concluded.

So far, there are disturbing indications that many reef fish species have been critically overfished, while others are rapidly declining. At least a third are endangered.

But Coetzee said stocks could be improved if fishing was drastically reduced. Just three species appeared to be exploitable, but would need continual management.

Those in the eco-tourism business call for a more aggressive stance. Permits need to be reviewed and quotas amended to include undersized fish. The coast belongs to local communities and tourists; foreign trawlers are no longer welcome.

Changing the local mindset is more difficult. A South African trawler has joined foreigners in the race for shark fins, — a race with long-term consequences similar to those of rhino horn. Time is clearly running out for eco-tourism.



Lethal nets ... Apart from nylon pollution in fresh water resources, illegal gillnet fishing is also causing an alarming drop in fresh water fish numbers, and is responsible for large numbers of birds dying when they become entangled in the nets.

Boost for SA green project

(56)

BY ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTER

Efforts to "green" South Africa have been stepped up with a national project to provide trees to low income group housing schemes.

The project, supported by the National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency (Nurcha), Trees for Africa and developers, aims to place a tree within the reach of every family on Nurcha-approved housing projects. Star 21/5/98

Nurcha CEO Cedric de Beer said: "The aim is a minimum of one tree per family and the encouragement of a greener environment. By year-end thousands of trees will have been planted," he said.

Nurcha and Trees for Africa will each contribute R10 towards a family. The house owner will have to find R10 to buy an indigenous or fruit tree.

The first trees that were planted through the project were at Othandweni on the East Rand and Keiskammahoek in the Eastern Cape.

Specialist team uncovers gillnet fishing syndicates

Tons being taken across the border

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environmental Reporter

A specialist team targeting unlawful gillnet fishing in fresh water sources in South Africa has uncovered illegal fishing syndicates operating around the country and even spreading across borders to neighbouring countries.

Craig Viljoen and his team from the Eko-care Trust, a volunteer organisation dedicated to conserving South Africa's water ecosystems, have uncovered operators using illegal gillnets in such resources as the Hartbeespoort dam, the Vaal dam, Pongola dam and even the St Lucia estuary.

"There is not a dam in the country that does not have a problem with netting," Viljoen said.

The use of illegal gillnets has escalated with the development of an extensive market for fresh water fish – one of the cheapest and most nutritious food forms – in South Africa and neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Swaziland.

"Initially people were only fishing for their own needs, but they found that fishing for illegal operators was an excellent way to make money. In certain parts of the country operators are offering fishermen up to R15 per kilogram of fresh fish," Viljoen said.

> **"Operators willing to pay up to R15 a kilo"**

"We know of one illegal operator in the North-West province who is selling 14 tons of fresh fish per week, another operator from Thohoyandou that enters Mozambique with up to three tons of fresh water fish, sometimes four times per week. We are investigating where the fish goes and who he bribes at the border controls," Viljoen said.

Illegal gillnet fishing has impacted negatively on indigenous fresh water fish species.

In the Hartbeespoort Dam alone, the blue kurper has been almost completely wiped out.

Apart from this, gillnets are also responsible for nylon pollution in water resources. Hundreds of kilometres of gillnets are removed from rivers and dams annually, mostly littered with the bodies of fish and birds which become tangled in the nets.

Despite the threat to the environment, illegal operators only face maximum admission of guilt fines of R200, if the case does go to court, he said.

Neither the Gauteng SAPS nor its endangered species protection unit regard illegal gillnet fishing as a priority crime and say law enforcement with regards to this problem falls on the shoulders of the Department of Environmental Affairs.

But the department itself does not have the manpower to enforce the law and instead concentrate their efforts on such priority crimes as trade control for illegal wildlife and products.

Steve Fourie, head of conservation for the Gauteng Department of Environmental Affairs, said the province – and Johannesburg especially – was the clearing house for illegal trade in endangered species and wildlife products including ivory, rhino horn and perlemoen.

With limited manpower the department concentrates its efforts on trade control of these products.

According to Fourie, only 20% of law enforcement posts in his department have been filled, forcing the department to play only a reactive role in trying to stop environmental crime.

Additional law enforcement officers will be deployed in areas such as Johannesburg, Sebokeng and Vanderbijlpark over the next two months.

In the meantime, the onus falls on the public to be on the lookout for illegal activities, and report it to the department, he said.

Viljoen said: "With only three members who have to cover the entire country I sometimes feel we are fighting a losing battle."

But the unit has had some success in bringing perpetrators to book. Recently 19 illegal operators were arrested in the Witbank area. Their cases are still pending.

Shipwreck turns desolate Wild Coast bay into polluted junkyard

Locals fear far-reaching environmental damage to coastline rich in sea life

(56) ARG 23/5/98

HEIDI CLARK
in Grahamstown

The Aster shipwreck – which is gradually rusting away and being torn apart by the huge Wild Coast waves – looks almost romantic in the fading afternoon light, until one peers a little closer.

The Mauritian-owned fresh produce vessel was wrecked six months ago, on November 13, after sailing into Mapazana Bay, a tiny inlet off Shark's Point, 5km south-west of Mpande.

The ship was said to be carrying less than her full capacity of 285 tons of oil, but she still left a 30km-wide slick of light fuel oil.

Saturday Argus visited the remote wreck site recently. Sadly, the visit confirmed the worst.

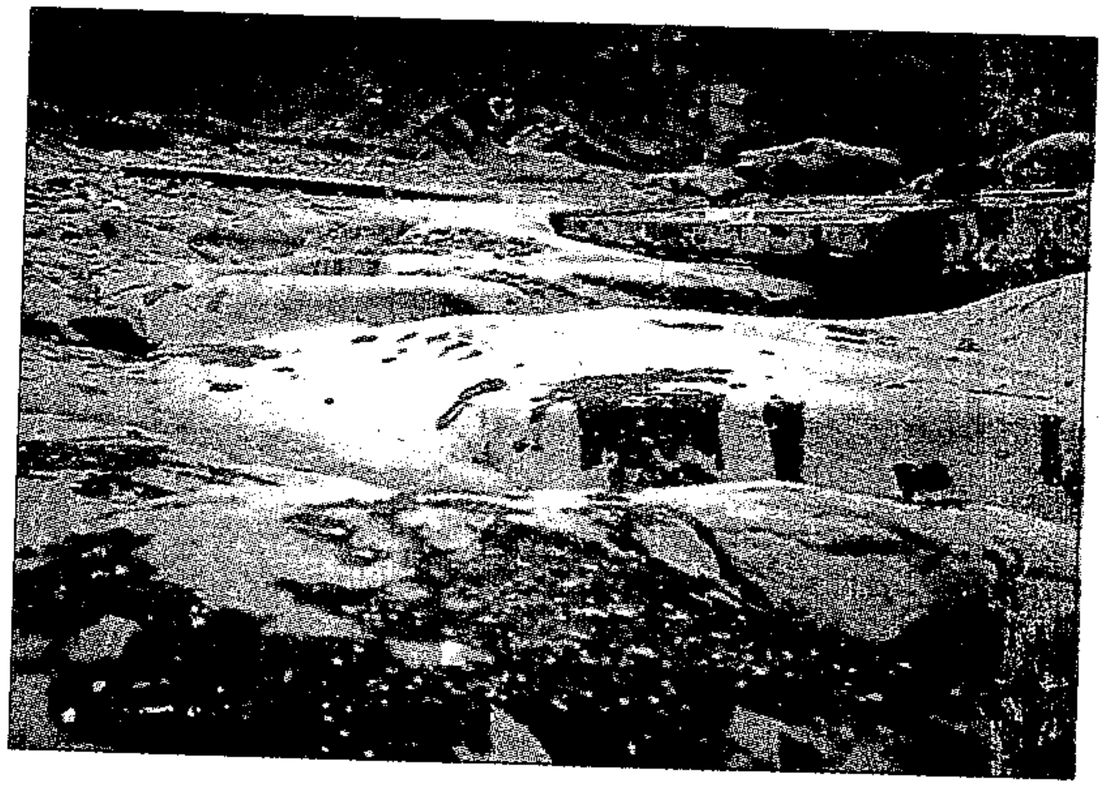
The Aster is spewing out her innards, leaving kilometres of pristine Wild Coast beaches littered with chunks of yellowing petroleum-based foam. Rocks in the sensitive inter-tidal zone are freckled with hardened oil deposits and a few small stones are covered with sticky oil.

The Aster can be found at the end of a three-hour hike along the Wild Coast. As we crested a hill overlooking Shark's Bay, the pollution was clearly visible as a yellow ring of crude on the shore.

A closer inspection revealed that the shore around the ship was carpeted with foam and the rocks splashed with oil.

Three of the ship's huge rectangular plates lay across the rocks and, in the middle of the little bay, two of the plates floated in the sea, clanking and creaking as the wave action forced more foam into the coastal eco-system.

SCRAPYARD: the once pristine Mapazana bay is now carpeted in styrofoam and blighted by the rusting



MARRED: the rocky shoreline is caked with oil from the Aster

Bits of scrap metal and foam littered the nearby hillside.

Hikers pass through the polluted junkyard on their way from Port St Johns to Coffee Bay.

Saturday Argus learnt this week that no one is responsible for clearing the mess.

Brian Yeo, the principle ship surveyor of the South African Maritime Safety Authority, said his department was no longer responsible for cleaning operations, as there was no damage to the environment.

He said the oil spill from the Aster had been broken up by dispersants. Oil still aboard the vessel was pumped into two 20-ton rubber bladders, which were emptied into tanks and sold to a Durban oil broker.

He said Mapazana Bay, which he described as stark and inhospitable, was not in any danger. "There is nothing there but rocks," he said.

Nonetheless, he conceded that the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism had received complaints about the mess and that, in December, officials had twice gone down to the wreck to investigate. They had not visited the site again.

Mr Yeo said his department was only responsible for removing the oil from the wreck. On land it was the responsibility of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

"They are entirely responsible for that. My responsibility ends once the oil is removed from the boat."

He said the remaining foam-and-metal eyesore was the fault of the locals.

"The locals were crawling around on the boat like ants after it was wrecked. They removed the galvanised steel sheeting containing the insulation from the ship," he said.

"The styrofoam is a nuisance factor, but it isn't an environmental hazard. It is flammable and could easily be burnt if someone collected it. Over the next few years, with continuous exposure to the sun and other elements, it will disintegrate," he said.

Andy Pike, a partner in a Durban law firm hired to handle the legal side of the operation, said the Durban-based salvage crew Sub Tech Diving had considered burning the oil.

Meanwhile, cottage owners and local residents complained that the stench of oil in the normally crisp sea air soon after wreck was almost unbearable.

Now they fear far-reaching environmental damage to the coastline, which is rich in sea life, such as black mussel, oysters, red bait and fish.

Lionel Ayers, the chairman of the Sinangwana and Mpande Cottages Association, said one of the cottage owners had complained to the authorities about the unsightly styrofoam. – ECN Weekend Service

MICHAEL SCHMIDT

ST 24/5/98

(56)

MY HOME, MY CASTLE: Ralph Sparg on the porch of the house tribal authorities allowed him to build

Picture: JACKIE CLAUSEN

Settler wars on the Wild Coast

WHEN Ralph Sparg takes in the spectacular sea view from his "illegal" cottage atop a hill overlooking the Wild Coast, he feels secure in his heritage as a born-and-bred Transkeian.

But he and at least 100 others living on the pristine coastline are fighting a battle with a high-profile corruption-busting unit which claims they have no right to be there.

The residents of the cottages claim the government is using outdated racist laws to oust them from land on which Xhosa chiefs said they could settle.

But the former Transkeian strongman and United Democratic Movement leader Bantu Holomisa lashed out at the settlers this week, saying they were rich people who had grabbed prime land which would have cost them millions on the South Coast.

The Heath Special Investigating Unit maintains that the occupiers are ruining the environment, their homesteads were not properly authorised and their presence is detrimental to the locals.

The argument between the settlers and the unit cuts right to the heart of the dispute between the state and some chiefs over who owns tribal lands.

The investigators believe communal land belongs to the state and only the government can dispose of it. But the chiefs say the land belongs to the people, and only they have authority.

On March 19, the High Court in Umtata ruled that attempts by the unit to bring the residents before a tribunal to answer charges of illegal occupation were invalid as President Nelson Mandela had yet to define its powers. But the unit has lodged an appeal and is now waiting for Mandela to give it bigger teeth to go after the settlers again.

"The crazy thing," Sparg, 63, mused, "is that my grandparents were coming to this spot overlooking the Umgazana estuary more than a hundred years ago. "My parents were born here, so was I, and so were my children and grandchildren. We were forced to leave in 1975 by the apartheid regime because we were white. We returned for a visit in 1991, and the locals were so happy to see us again they begged us to stay."

Sparg said allegations that some people had bought prime sites from headmen for the price of a bottle of brandy were "rubbish". "No one can buy land here. All the chiefs can do is give you permission to occupy — and they can kick you off if you cause trouble."

Crunch for conservation

(56) ST (CM) 24/5/98

CHARL DE VILLIERS

THE provincial cabinet is next month due to draw up principles on statutory boards which may have far-reaching repercussions for conservation in the Western Cape.

Environmental and Cultural Affairs departmental head, Carel du Preez confirmed on Friday that the Cape Nature Conservation Board Bill would only be finalised once the province had made up its mind about statutory boards.

The Bill sets out to give greater administrative and financial independence to Cape Nature Conservation, which is battling to overcome chronic funding and staffing shortages. The provincial cabinet has given its approval for a new conservation body designed along the lines of the highly successful Natal Parks Board.

But the plans have come under fire from a special team appointed by the cabinet to investigate the effective functioning of the provincial administration. The Special Investigation: Cabinet Assignment team has recommended that no statutory boards be created before finality is reached on the issue.

ANC environment spokesman Russell McGregor said his party welcomed the revisiting of the issue of statutory boards, but believed this had to be done by the entire provincial legislature and "not just one party's caucus".

Now V&A struck by oil

Pollution alert for Waterfront birds, seals

(56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

A big oil spill in Cape Town harbour has spread to the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront in spite of efforts to contain it in Duncan Dock.

The spill is much bigger than first thought and is now estimated at about 200 tons – more than three times the first estimate of 60 tons.

Pollution control workers from Sea Fisheries and Portnet were hard at work today trying to clean up.

The oil – a mixture of heavy bunker fuel and some marine diesel – spread into the Waterfront area yesterday.

The oil is not particularly toxic, and because the marine environment of the harbour has been substantially changed by development, environmentalists do not expect serious ecological damage.

A watch is being kept for seals and seabirds that may be affected.

Lynn Jackson, head of Sea Fisheries' pollution division, said her staff had been mopping up all day yesterday.

"It was much bigger than we thought, probably 200 tons," Dr Jackson said today.

Booms had been deployed to contain the oil, and bubble devices, which are permanent anti-pollution features in the harbour, had been switched on.

"It seemed the oil was being contained against the drydock and the yacht basin area, and they were picking it up with rope-mops," Dr Jackson said.

"The clean-up was going quite well, but then we were told that quite a lot of oil had got into the Waterfront.

"But it seems the spill is limited to the harbour area and there's not a lot outside."

Dr Jackson could not understand how such a big spill could have occurred, because

ARG 26/5/98

fuel lines were fitted with pressure gauges. "If someone is on duty, they should see the drop in pressure immediately."

Gerry Croxford, manager of the company operating the bunker services in the harbour, said the fuel line where the spill had occurred – inside a tunnel in the landing wall – had been isolated and that the rest of the system was operating normally. "Hopefully by the end of today we should have removed 80 or 90% of it."

Environmental policy 'a bold paradigm shift'

BD 29/5/98 (56)

David Greybe

CAPE TOWN — The environmental affairs department will play a more active role in environmental management at all levels of government in terms of new policy proposals released yesterday.

Launching the white paper on environmental management policy, environmental affairs and tourism minister Pallo Jordan said it represented "a bold paradigm shift" from the present fragmented system. The new policy was based on co-operative governance.

Importantly, the white paper recognises that "as custodian, government is charged with a public trust to protect the environment for the benefit of present and future generations".

However, for the first time a single department — environmental affairs — would co-ordinate the environmental functions of national, provincial and local government. It could even lead to his department losing its "Cinderella" tag, Jordan said.

His deputy, Peter Mokaba, said departments would be expected to submit environmental management programmes to the department and report on their implementation.

As lead agent for environmental management, however, the environmental affairs department would be "responsible and accountable for enforcing compliance". The department would also be "responsible for exercising government's custodianship of the environment and ensure that people's environmental rights are enforced".

Jordan said the proposed new bill on environmental management would be discussed by cabinet's economic affairs committee next month. He was confident Parliament would pass the bill this year still.

The white paper proposes the department develop framework legislation to provide for, among other things, national norms and standards, principles for decision-making and conflict management, and the powers of the lead agent and other departments and spheres of government.

The paper's release was made possible by the resolution of differences over the implementation of the white paper and working relationships between mainly the departments of environmental affairs, water affairs and forestry and minerals and energy.

The departments accepted the white paper but would enter a process of consultation "to ensure that functions are exercised efficiently, without duplication and in a co-operative and mutually supportive manner".

Firm responsible will pay for oil spill

BA 29/5/98 (56)

Josey Ballenger

THE clean-up of the 150-ton oil spill in Cape Town harbour — the largest in its history — should be completed at the weekend and will be paid for by the distribution company responsible, Joint Bunkering Services.(JBS).

The environmental affairs department said yesterday it would ask JBS to launch an internal investigation into its "poor management".

"Small spills are quite frequent, but this is the first time we've had such a big spill in this harbour," said Lynn Jackson, assistant director of the department's marine pollution division. She said the department would not take legal action against JBS — jointly owned by petrol companies Engen, Caltex, Shell and BP — as long as the company was prepared to pay for clean-up costs.

"Companies are generally not fined when a spill is accidental, but they are prosecuted when it is a deliberate discharge," she said. "But we may suggest that an internal investigation be done into management practices, because for that amount of oil to spill means they did not pick up this break in the pipeline for several hours."

JBS official Hank Smit said the company would cover all costs. The spill was undetected until late last Sunday because it was mostly contained in a service channel.

Jackson said the spill was caused by a heavy object falling and cracking a pipeline on the quayside of the harbour near the Sturrock dry dock. About 650 tons of oil leaked from the pipe, but about 500 tons had remained in the tunnel. At least 120 tons escaped into the water, some of which moved to Table Bay and the V&A Waterfront.

The department and Portnet immediately started the clean-up, with the help of the Blouberg local council, and worked throughout the week to clean the affected water, bird life and land.

Authorities used floating booms and bubble barriers to contain the oil and clean the water, "but they are not foolproof", Jackson warned. "Fortunately, most of the oil has been contained in the harbour, but there are a lot of birds there, mostly cormorants. I do not think they have found any dead yet, but about 22 have been collected and taken to a rehabilitation centre."

In addition, workers were trying to catch an estimated 30 to 50 contaminated seals in the harbour, and about 200 penguins which ran ashore at Robben Island, for cleaning.

Jackson said the oil, a heavy bunker fuel, was physically, rather than chemically, damaging to marine life.

At last we have a Peninsula national park

(56) ARG 29/5/98

Proclamation unlocks R60-million and creates hundreds of jobs

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

It's official – we have a new Cape Peninsula National Park.

A notice proclaiming the park appears in today's Government Gazette under the signature of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan.

The immediate effect is to unlock more than R60-million in foreign conservation funding – most of which will be spent in the new park – and to employ several hundred previously jobless people in the Peninsula, probably within two weeks.

The workers will be hired – or re-hired in the case of some employed on short-term contracts earlier this year – to remove invasive alien vegetation from key conservation areas such as the Silvermine Valley, Sandy Bay and the slopes of the Karbonkelberg.

The international funding is $12,3-million (about R63,7-million) from the Washington-based Global Environmental Facility, a joint venture between the World Bank which administers it, the UN Environment Programme and the UN Development Programme.

One of the facility's main aims is conserving biodiversity – all forms of life on Earth – and the Cape Peninsula is internationally recognised as one of the world's "hottest of biodiversity hotspots".

Around $6,3-million (R32,6-million) will be used over six years to help set up the Cape Peninsula National Park, and will initially be released into the operating budget at a rate of about R4-million every four months.

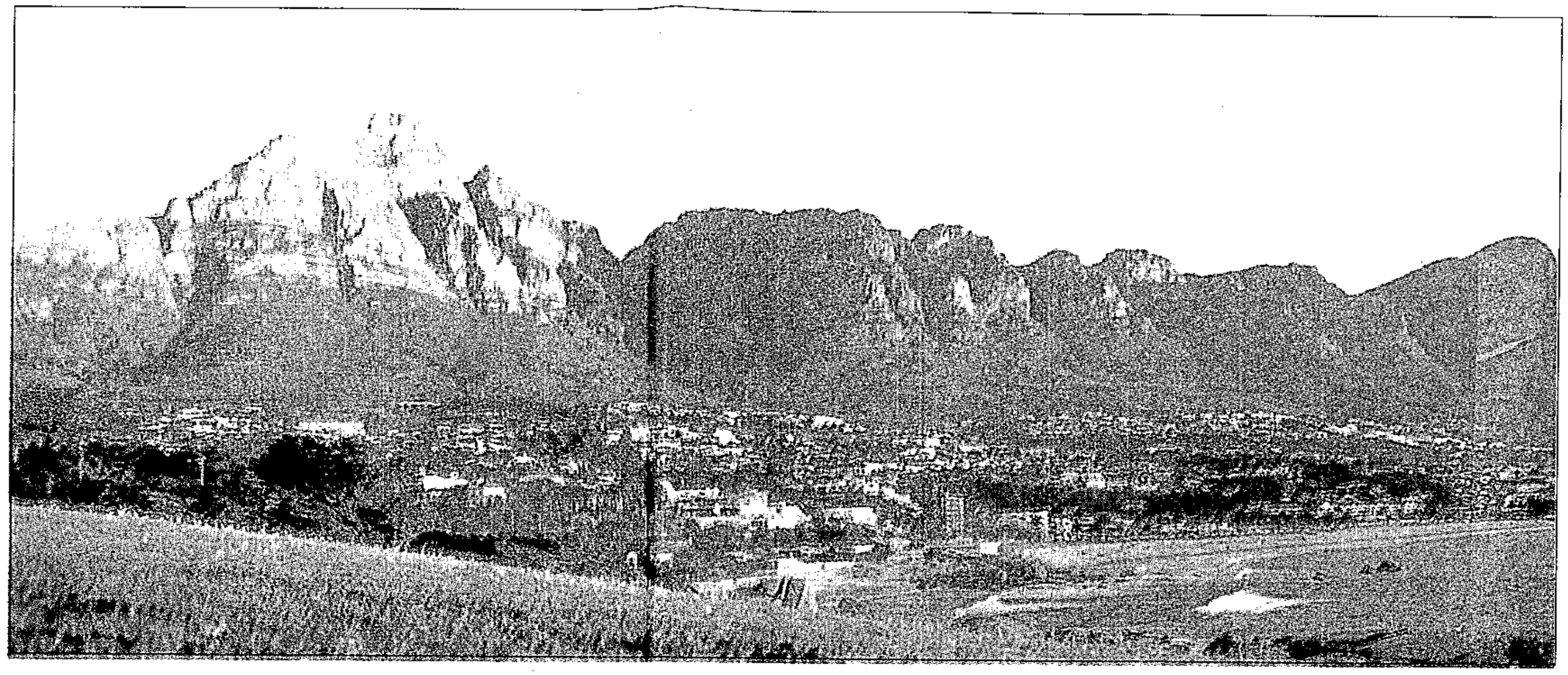
Another $5-million (R23,3-million) will be deposited into the Table Mountain Fund, established in 1993 and administered by the World Wide Fund for Nature – South Africa, on behalf of local conservationists, as a sustainable fund for a broad range of conservation projects in the Peninsula.

The final $1-million (R5,18-million) has been earmarked for a substantial scientific survey of the most pressing conservation issues in the Cape Floristic Region, which extends roughly from the southern edge of Namaqualand to Mossel Bay in the east.

The Global Environmental Facility council approved the South African grant in November but attached conditions formoney to be released. These includedthat the new park be proclaimed by June 2 and that the Table MountainFund be registered and trustees appointed. This was done on March 11.

"With today's proclamation, the park formally becomes a legal entity, and we will be able to draw on that money," said a delighted David Daitz, warden of the new park.

An amount of R7-million has been allocated for the removal of invasive alien vegetation from the park during the first year.



Natural jewel: our glorious mountain chain forms the new Cape Peninsula National Park. International funds will now kick-start the fight against invasive alien vegetation

Tourist treat: sightseers enjoy the Cape's spectacular scenery from a park view site

Fighting the good fight for conservation

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

It's like paddling a canoe through rapidly setting cement!

That's the metaphor used by David Daitz, warden of the new Cape Peninsula National Park, to describe the tense process of hammering out all the agreements necessary for the formation of the new park.

But he also quickly confesses to being "bullish" about this process, and estimates that he and his staff are "more than half-way" in their ultimate goal of creating a park of just under 30 000ha to protect the Peninsula's most valuable conservation land.

"I can attest to the fact that we are making progress," he told the annual meeting of the Fairest Cape Association yesterday.

Mr Daitz said the park was being forged from the existing proclaimed Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment area, about 80% of which was owned by national and provincial government departments and local authorities and 20% privately owned.

The park was formally established with the transfer of conservation land – about 14 000ha – from the Cape Metropolitan Council, the City of Cape Town and the South Peninsula Municipality.

Negotiations were continuing with the Department of Public Works for the transfer of the rest of the state-owned land, Mr Daitz said.

"I can confidently state that within six to nine months this state land will be incorporated in the park. And I'm also pretty sure that we will meet the application deadline of June 1999 for World Heritage Site status."

He said the remaining privately owned 20% of the protected area, which SA National Parks was keen to incorporate into the new park, belonged to 174 landowners.

"So that's a lot of negotiation to do. The good news is there are only 13 of them who own properties bigger than 100ha in extent, and overall this amounts to some 3 500ha of the 5 200ha in private ownership.

"But that's not the only consideration. There are also issues of 'hotspots' of biodiversity on private land that have to be taken into account."

He identified three principal threats to the park: the spread of invasive alien vegetation; development on land that deserved to be conserved; and the ever-increasing number of people using the area in an uncontrolled way.

"And in the end they all come back to one central issue – money."

Conservationists tended not to deal with this issue very well, Mr Daitz suggested. "The first principle of conservation, ahead of any other, is money, and we have to make this national park self-sufficient – the days of going to our Government cap in hand are past."

It was fortunate that the park was in the centre of the Western Cape tourist mecca, Mr Daitz said

Seven of the top 10 tourist destinations in southern Africa were in the Western Cape, and three were in the park – Table Mountain; Kirstenbosch and Cape Point.

"We can achieve self-sufficiency by tapping the tourist potential," Mr Daitz said.

"We need to develop appropriately some 2% of the area, to absorb the impacts of about 90% of the users."

Environmental muscle: Dumping companies like Waste-tech are learning how to involve communities in new projects. PHOTOGRAPH: CRAIG BISHOP

Dealing with dumping

M+G 29/5/—4/6/98

Craig Bishop (56)

The launch of the National Environment Management Bill this week is expected to give communities a "lot more political muscle in dealing with companies", says Chris Albertyn, national co-ordinator of the Environmental Justice Networking Forum.

"The new Bill recognises that the government has very little capacity to deal with companies breaking environmental laws. It gives communities more rights to protect themselves," he says.

That communities are in desperate need of more "muscle" was evident at this week's environment and poverty hearings, held in Aloes, near Port Elizabeth. People from around the country described what it's like living next door to toxic waste dumps and dealing with constant air and water pollution.

Said Daniel Pienaar (74), who moved to Aloes in 1949: "We have been very unhappy and uncomfortable since Waste-tech came into this area with their incinerator and waste dump. As a result of the pollution, a lot of people are dead."

Waste-tech spends more than R100 000 a month in a vain attempt to contain the odours but, says Pumlani Ximiya, Waste-tech's business development manager. "We contain the stench for several days, then it comes back again."

Pienaar, who used to work at the Waste-tech incinerator, says plastic containers and amputated body-parts from hospitals are burnt there. "When I discovered that people's legs and arms also get burnt, I decided to quit."

Waste-tech's managing director, Ken Bromfield, said industrial companies have been forced to learn how to talk to communities in the past six years. "Look at the proposed Chloorkop dump site in Kempton Park. It was only after several years of debate with local communities that we realised we had to downgrade the size of the site. It was never opened as a hazardous site."

The hearings were told that 83% of South African waste sites are unregulated, and that most leak toxic chemicals.

Said Bobby Peek, the Environmental Justice Networking Forum's community campaign co-ordinator: "Waste-tech has landfill sites all over the country, but the government still has no strict guidelines or policies in place to ensure that landfill sites are moved away from marginalised communities.

"There has been a history of environmental racism, with 'dirty industries' located next to poor, black communities. Because of job prospects, the communities valued the industries. They never knew the dangers."

Under the new Bill, which should become law in September, communities will be able to approach a public prosecutor with their environmental grievances. If no action is taken within 14 days, the community will be able to prosecute. If the community loses the case, it will be protected against costs. If it wins, the perpetrator will pay all costs as well as compensation.

The new Bill was tabled by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism this week. Albertyn says it is "revolutionary. It is an avenue for communities to do something themselves, rather than waiting for the government."

Waste-tech's Bromfield says the new Bill is a "move in the right direction. In the past projects went ahead without community participation. We are learning."

Another tribe seeks to recover land in the Kruger Park

Star 30/5/98 (56)

By JEAN L MAY

Tribal chiefs who were forcibly ejected with their people from the southern half of the Kruger National Park in 1924 are lodging claims with the Land Claims Commission for the return of the land. The area involved lies between the Sabie River and the southern border, and is said to include Skukuza camp, which is also the administrative centre.

Durkje Gilfillan, regional land claims commissioner for Mpumalanga and Northern Province, confirmed to the *Saturday Star* that claims for large areas in the Skukuza and Gomondwane regions were being processed. But Gilfillan stressed that the right to conservation was entrenched in the South African constitution.

"It is absolutely wrong to conclude that if land is returned to dispossessed tribal people, then the Kruger National Park will disappear," she said. "For example, the agreement with the Makuleke people (in the north of the park) is tightly drafted and will probably serve as a model if any other land claims succeed. The agreement lays down that they will get some of the benefits, but that the area will certainly be retained as a conservation area.

"A joint management body will be responsible for the overall management, but conservation will still be managed by the National Parks Board."

The agreement also stipulates that no mining, farming or permanent residence will be allowed within the area without the permission of the National Parks Board.

Sensitive issue

Fanyana Shiburi, general manager (corporate affairs) for the National Parks Board, said he was aware that claims for land in the southern half of the Park were in the offing, but that no official comment could be made at present.

A spokesman for the public relations directorate of the Parks Board, who refused to be named, said land claims in the Park were "an extremely sensitive political issue and are being handled with kid gloves".

The new claims come after a successful bid by the Makuleke community, who were removed from their land in the northern Pafuri area in 1969 and who have regained their land after protracted negotiations with the Parks Board.

The *Saturday Star* has established that the tribal communities making the current claim were removed without compensation in 1924 by the famed warden, Colonel James Stevenson-Hamilton, who was named "Skukuza"–meaning "someone who sweeps away". They were moved first to the state-owned Ten Bosch farm, between the Kruger Park's southern boundary and the main railway line to Komatipoort. In 1954 they were forcibly removed for the second time to the Nkomazi area within the former KaNgwane homeland.

Involved in the present negotiations are Chiefs Lugedlane, Hoyi and Siboshwa, all descendants of chiefs who were "swept away" by Stevenson-Hamilton.

Sources involved in the negotiations said there was a great deal of ill-feeling towards the authorities, "who had driven people from their homes without compensation".

"There is great deal of poverty and unemployment, and people are bitter that more attention is given to the needs of animals than to the needs of people," one said.

At the time of the first removal, the area was part of the Sabie Game Reserve, which was amalgamated with the Singwetsi Game Reserve in 1926 to form the world-renowned Kruger National Park.

Biltong

Although the Kruger Park is celebrating its centenary this year on the grounds that the Transvaal Volksraad proclaimed the Sabie Game Reserve in 1898, there is little historical fact to connect President Paul Kruger to it. It has been suggested that his name was dredged up as a political stunt in 1925. Stevenson-Hamilton admitted as much, writing to a friend: "I wonder what the old man, who never in his life thought of wild animals except as biltong, would say if he could see himself depicted as the saviour of South African game."

Greens stunned as Mokaba delays Bill

CHARL DE VILLIERS

(56) ST (CM) 31/5/98

ENVIRONMENTALISTS are stunned at an 11th hour intervention by deputy Environment Minister Peter Mokaba to delay the gazetting of a landmark environmental Bill.

The Draft National Environmental Management Bill — which spells out for the first time in law what the government means by "sustainable development" and gives environmental watchdogs unprecedented powers — was to have been published in the Government Gazette on Friday.

This did not happen, however, despite a statement by Environment Minister Pallo Jordan on Thursday that the Bill, drafted after nearly three years of talks, would be gazetted the next day.

Instead, Mokaba is due to meet various stakeholders and their lawyers in Cape Town tomorrow, sources said.

The business lobby is reputedly unhappy with proposals which extend and entrench the legal standing of individuals to litigate in the public or environmental interest. It has also allegedly complained to Mokaba about clauses that allow private prosecution and limit court costs in litigation.

"A powerful business and industrial lobby is doing everything it can to maintain the status quo. If the Bill is not approved by cabinet on June 17, there's no chance that it will go through Parliament before the year 2000," said national coordinator for the Environmental Justice Networking Forum, Chris Albertyn.

The parliamentary portfolio committee on environment affairs is due to hear evidence about the Bill on Wednesday.

Mokaba, who this week praised the Bill as "dealing with sustainable development as a living policy of government", could not be reached for comment.

Kruger Park land returned to Maluleke 23 years after forced removals

Star 1/6/98 (56)

By Matthew Burbidge

The Makuleke peoples' land in the Kruger National Park was returned to them over the weekend – 23 years after they were officially declared squatters and forced off their land.

The Makuleke lodged their land claim in 1996, realising the fears of some conservationists that the Kruger Park would begin to disintegrate.

The 25 000ha-land claim was signed over to the community at a ceremony in Ntlhaveni in the Northern Province on Saturday and will increase the size of the park by 5 000ha. The community has been granted exclusive rights to the land and have entered into a conservation management partnership with the Parks Board.

The community plan to build a game lodge on the land, which lies in the fertile Pafuri Triangle in the northern part of the park. The revenue from the lodge will be used to develop the Ntlhaveni community.

Some of the Makuleke community will be trained as rangers and others will work at the lodge, which is expected to be planned along similar lines to the Mala-Mala Game Reserve.

Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom said the Makuleke would enhance the value of the park by allowing tourists to experience the diversity of South African culture.

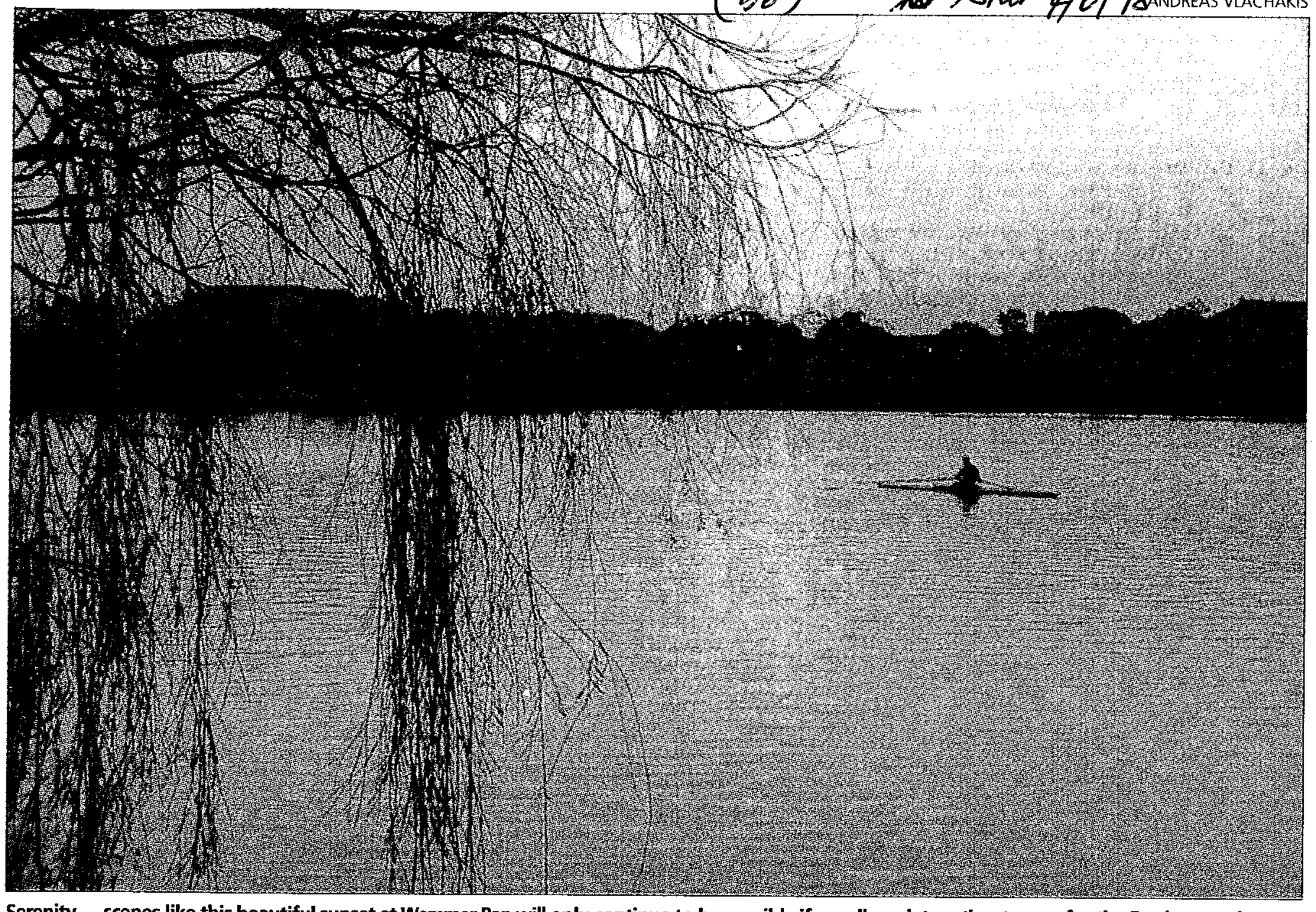
He said the claim set an important precedent in the light of the land claim by the San to parts of the Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park.

Treasure our world

Time to reflect on ways to simultaneously promote economic and environmental goals in South Africa. Glenda Daniels reports

(56) Star 4/6/98

ANDREAS VLACHAKIS



Serenity ... scenes like this beautiful sunset at Wemmer Pan will only continue to be possible if we all work together to care for the Earth around us.

The value of things we cannot buy or sell, such as clean fresh air, clean water, the beauty of a landscape, the diversity of life and the quality of the biosphere tends to be underestimated.

Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan, who is keen to promote the awareness that over-consumption of our natural resources will impact negatively on the environment and ultimately threaten our survival, feels this way.

While there is a higher consciousness today about the importance of preserving the environment, the celebration of World Environment Day and National Environment Week (June 1 to June 7) is useful to remind us of the little ways in which we can make a difference.

The theme of World Environment Day, which is celebrated all over the world tomorrow, is "For Life on Earth" and the slogan is "Live Sustainably and Conserve".

While growth and development is essential to improve the quality of life of all South Africans, it has to be less polluting, more efficient in the use of energy and natural resources and more environmentally sensitive, according to Jordan.

In order to live sustainably and conserve, we should think before we use resources, and use them in such a way that we ensure the future availability of the natural resources he says.

We should not over-utilise, pollute or waste natural resources, only use what is needed, is the message of the day.

In concrete terms, the department has published a white paper on environment management policy, heralding the dawn of a new era in environmental governance.

The policy document is the culmination of a three-year participatory process by labour, government, non-governmental organisations and communities.

The principles which underpin the white paper and offer a vision for the future include:

- Changing from a society oriented to satisfying the needs and desires of a few to one committed to satisfying the basic needs of all.
- Changing from an externally dependent society to one which is endogenous and more self-sufficient.
- Accepting that there will be a natural limit placed on the ability to constantly expand economic activity and re-orientate towards sustainability.

"In five years' time, environmental policy will have made a significant contribution to improving the quality of life of all citizens, particularly disadvantaged groups, through reconciling economic development with sustainable use, protection and improvement of the environment for present and future generations," Jordan says.

The Government intends to increase public awareness and understanding of environmental issues; increase public participation on environmental management at all levels in society, institute a clear plan of action from Government to address environmental problems throughout the country and compliance with standards, monitoring and reporting that demonstrates a tangible improvement in the sustainable use of natural resources.

Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa's Norman Dennet says the value of having a World Environment Day is to spread awareness and to use the opportunity to launch environmental education campaigns for the public.

The age of exploitation of the world's resources has to stop, he says. We have to start caring for the Earth, he adds.

Dennet hails the Makuleke project in the Northern Province as a major breakthrough. "Here people have been far-sighted enough to use eco-tourism as part of subsistence agriculture," Dennet says.

An historic agreement was signed last week by the SA Government, giving back to 2 570 families land in the Kruger Park from which they had been dispossessed under apartheid laws. Over 12 000 members of the Makuleke community will benefit from this innovative eco-tourism agreement.

The agreement has been welcomed by conservationists as a breakthrough as it could mean rapid progress in the establishment of a trans-frontier park in the region.

It also opens the way for participation of indigenous communities in the management of sensitive ecosystems, according to the Land Affairs Ministry. This was not considered in apartheid days.

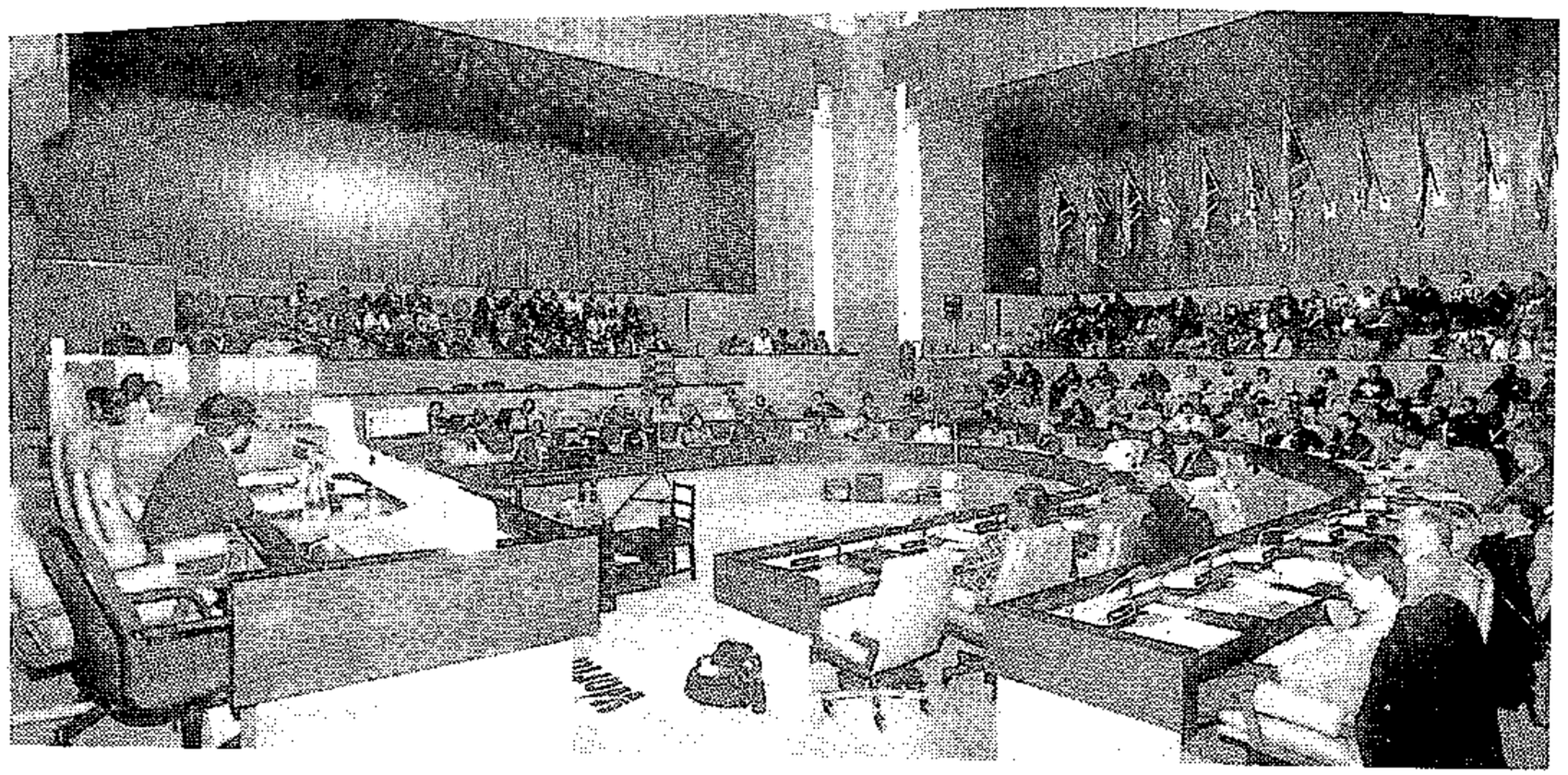
Meanwhile, today and tomorrow, the CSIR division of water, environment and forestry technology in co-operation with the Rietvlei Nature Reserve will engage 150 pupils from Bonwelong Primary School in Ivory Park and Sikhanyisile Primary School in Mamelodi in a clean environment project.

The programme includes the water cycle and human interference, a fishing game, a pollution game, the population and water supplies and a visit to a purification plant.

To get involved in environmental projects and awareness, see the box above.

Get involved, and take these helpful hints

- Don't waste water. Use a cup, not your hands, when you drink water. Don't let the water run when you brush you teeth.
- Don't waste electricity. Switch off lights if you're not using them as they emit the harmful gas sulphur. One hour of a lamp burning emits three cubic metres of sulphur into the atmosphere.
- Get involved in projects to prevent exploitation of rainforests.
- Support projects to preserve nature reserves such as Rietfontein, Langebaan, Linksfield Ridge and Gilooleys Farm.
- Make sure that your waste gets recycled.
- Plant trees to attract birds.
- Join an environmental club. There are 480 environmental and wildlife clubs in the country.
- Create a compost heap for grass cuttings and food waste.
- Find more information on the Internet. Look up the website of the Wildlife and Environmental Society – *www.wildlifesociety.org.za*
- Trees for Africa calls for all South Africans to get involved in tree-growing projects around the country. For more info call (011) 803-9750 or e-mail *trees@cis.co.za*
- Other ways you can contribute towards National Environment Week is to buy a green gift for family members or friends, from Trees for Africa – the proceeds will go toward planting trees for disadvantaged communities.



Gauteng agriculture, conservation and environment MEC Nomvula Mokonyane addresses the media and others guests at the Metropolitan Council in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, on Friday. Pictures: TYRONE ARTHUR

Four townships to be recycling guinea pigs

Josey Ballenger BD 8/6/98 (56)

FOUR Gauteng townships would be the sites of a pilot recycling project to combat one of the province's "most crucial" environmental issues — waste management, environment MEC Nomvula Mokonyane announced at the weekend.

Sebokeng, Alexandra, Orange Farm and Meadowlands were chosen primarily because they had a high rate of littering and illegal dumping, Mokonyane said at the launch of World Environment Day on Friday.

"Our townships are today in a state of environmental degradation because it was government policy to neglect them ... there was little or no refuse removal services," she said.

The result was that formerly all-white areas had an abundance of open spaces, trees, grass and well-organised refuse removal systems, while townships suffered from a lack of these.

At least 84 primary and high schools would form 25-member "eco clubs" to collect recyclable cans, glass, plastic and paper from their homes and neighbourhoods. Any money generated would be used by the schools.

Joanne Yawitch, the department's chief director of conservation and environment, said the project could create spin-offs such as environmental research centres, clean ups, parks and conservation areas.

Because of Gauteng's highly industrialised and densely populated nature, it was "reaching a point where there is a shortage of land for landfill sites", Mokonyane said.

At the same time, a lack of recycling awareness meant that about 80% of waste going to landfill sites was recyclable.

Ronnie Swartz, the deputy director-general of the Gauteng education department, warned that "some unscrupulous developed nations" were looking to "use Africa as a dumping ground" for their waste. While there might be a short-term temptation for the cash involved, Swartz said SA would "regret" using its land in that way in 10 to 20 years.

Officer to oversee protection of highly sensitive Seekoeivlei

(56) Star 8/6/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environmental Reporter

A fulltime environmental education officer has been appointed in the Seekoeivlei area in the eastern Free State in an effort to protect the area from degradation.

The education officer will also promote the importance of sustaining the area which has a direct effect on the quality of water flowing into the Vaal Dam.

The launch of the community environmental education programme for the vlei was done in conjunction with Rand Water, the South African Crane Working Group and a working group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust.

The programme will target landowners, farm workers, farm schools, teachers, schoolchildren and local authorities.

For the past 18 months Rand Water and Free State Nature Conservation has been working to restore the area which has been severely damaged due to human activity, such as farming, over the past 100 years.

Situated on the Klip River, the vlei has been reduced from a floodplain several kilometres wide to a river channel only a few metres wide. It supplies water to the Vaal Dam which in turn supplies Gauteng, and is the largest wetland on the highveld.

Seekoeivlei is recognised under the Ramsar Convention as being of international importance.

Rand Water's water environment manager Chris Viljoen said: "We wanted to have an ongoing presence in the area, partly because of its importance to Gauteng's water supply and partly to continue the relationship of trust and support that has been developed with local people and landowners.

"As custodians of Gauteng's water supply, the preservation and sustainable management of wetlands goes to the core of our business."

If the vlei is properly maintained it could save Rand Water millions of rands in purification costs which will be beneficial to consumers.

Other benefits include plans by Free State Nature Conservation to develop Seekoeivlei for ecotourism, thereby providing much-needed employment opportunities in the community.

These plans will also include the reintroduction of indigenous fauna and flora such as hippos and wattled crane to the area.

AY, JUNE 12 1998

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Mpumalanga MEC sacks 228 staff members in 'clean-up' operation

(56) BD 12/6/98

Kevin O'Grady

NEW Mpumalanga environmental affairs MEC Fish Mahlalela yesterday sacked 228 temporary staff members who were irregularly employed under his predecessor, David Mkhwanazi. The move was expected to save his department R1m a month in salaries.

Mkhwanazi resigned in April after being dogged for months by allegations of nepotism, mismanagement and fraud in his department.

Among the allegations was that he ignored a freeze on posts in the provincial government and gave senior positions in his department to colleagues in the SA National Civics Organisation, of which he is provincial leader.

Mahlalela's spokesman, Sipho Lukhele, confirmed that 228 employees — in positions ranging from general assistant to environmental officer and tourism officer — had been fired from either the department's Nelspruit head office or district offices. A number of them were among those whose employment had been questioned.

AENS reports the staff complement, which included the previous MEC's personal staff, was supposed to form part of Mpumalanga's environmental conservation and tourism agency. The agency was created by Mkhwanazi late last year as part of a reported streamlining and cost-cutting exercise. Instead staff levels rose from 600 to more than 800.

Mahlalela said some of those fired were troublemakers who would be arrested if they attempted to protest against the decision. "I am not being unsympathetic. I am simply trying to clean up the mess Mkhwanazi left behind. If you want to blame anyone, blame him," Mahlalela said.

Lukhele said a provincial freeze on temporary posts was declared in June last year but "instead of laying people off" the department kept them on and channelled salary funds through the Mpumalanga Parks Board.

Some of the appointments had already been rejected by the provincial public service commission as well as the department's director-general, Frank Mbatha. Mahlalela said Mbatha "issued strict instructions to my predecessor not to hire any more people... I view them as temporary workers who are no longer required."

Mkhwanazi is under investigation by public protector Selby Baqwa after it was revealed recently that his wife, daughter, sister-in-law and cousin all worked in his department.

Mahlalela also said he was aware of a group among his remaining staff that was attempting to sabotage his anti-corruption efforts.

Row over land project

(56) M+G 12-18/6/98

Ann Eveleth

A row broke out this week between the Department of Agriculture and other parties engaged in the campaign against land degradation. The heated fracas — on the eve of World Desertification Day next Wednesday — follows a decision by national and provincial agriculture officials to disband a broad-based steering committee set up in 1995 to develop a grassroots land-care programme to prevent soil erosion.

The Environmental Monitoring Group, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism raised the alarm this week when they received letters from the agriculture department's resource conservation director, Njabulo Nduli, informing them of the decision.

They claimed it effectively kicked them out of a process that was meant to be widely consultative.

South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification last September, committing itself to a participatory process with communities affected by land degradation — mainly those living in former homelands — and the development of a national action programme.

The departments of land, agriculture, environmental affairs, water and forestry are each expected to take steps to counter the degradation of natural resources under their control.

A national interdepartmental steering committee to co-ordinate these efforts began working last year.

But an informal steering committee from various arms of the government and civil society began working with the Department of Agriculture's anti-erosion LandCare programme much earlier, in 1995.

This group held a workshop in April this year which recommended a national steering committee representing all key stakeholders be formalised.

Erstwhile committee members told the *Mail & Guardian* this week they were "shocked" to learn that a meeting of agricultural ministers and MECs last month had instead decided to place the LandCare policy process in the hands of national and provincial department officials only.

Environmental Monitoring Group representative Noel Oettle said the "top down" decision flew in the face of South Africa's international obligations to carry out a "participative, grassroots process".

CSIR representative Dirk Versfeld added: "An initiative of that nature cannot succeed without outside input."

And environmental affairs department representative Wilma Lutch — who is the government's national representative on the convention — said her department had had "no input in this decision.

Suddenly the steering committee is disbanded. [The convention] is all about partnerships and bottom-up approaches. We need LandCare for [the convention] and if we're out, then we can't use it."

Nduli denied the steering committee had been disbanded, saying: "It was just a group of enthusiasts. [The committee] had no official standing. You can't say it was disbanded."

Her letter to stakeholders, however, informed them that the "LandCare steering committee of the past two years is in effect disbanded". She said these stakeholders still had a role to play in LandCare's "evolving process" at a provincial level.

But Oettle argued that the groups needed to participate at national, provincial and local level. "The truth is that policy is not decided at a local level," he said.

"What [the Department of] Agriculture has in mind is a major 10-year programme, a job-creation approach and the creation of erosion-control structures. The lessons that environmental NGOs have learned is that this 'rocks in dongas' approach does not work, because then people are not responsible for their soil.

We have argued for a longer, slower and deeper approach, and I think the government wants to avoid that," added Oettle.

Research nearing completion on soil-erosion projects around the country supported his view.

The CSIR's Versfeld said the Department of Agriculture is "extremely short on resources and capacity. We're willing and able to help, and we have the capacity. We see this move as a rejection of that offer of support by an organisation which cannot afford to reject it."

Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs Derek Hanekom says he sees no reason why NGOs cannot continue to contribute to the process. He says he will call a meeting of stakeholders "to discuss how we can best give effect to the participation of NGOs".

The UN estimates that 90% of South Africa's land is vulnerable to soil erosion and land degradation — a process that results from the pressures of human activities — overgrazing, intensive farming, deforestation and poor irrigation on the land.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN REVENUE SERVICE (SARS)

OPEN INVITATION TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

SARS is a dynamic organisation which consists of approximately 12 000 personnel and has decided to embark on a transformation process that will enable the organisation to make a leap into the future.

SARS is now in the process of establishing a database of competencies/skills available in the market. You are invited to submit a proposal in writing (not longer than 40 pages), to motivate/illustrate how you can contribute and assist the South African Revenue Service through its journey of transformation.

Please be specific on the following:

- Brief background/history of yourselves as an organisation/group with specific reference to representivity and contributions made to disadvantaged groups
- List of clients where large transformation interventions have been undertaken, linked to results achieved
- Transformation and change management
- Business systems development
- Management of Diversity
- The models/tools/methodologies used and linked to time frames
- A road map of how you understand the transformation process with specific reference to the type of interventions (hard and soft) needed, based on short, medium and long-term frames
- How to measure transformation outcomes and alignment with the strategic direction of SARS
- How you would transfer knowledge and to what extent be prepared to:
  1. work together with other consultants if the need may be
  2. work within a certain terms of reference, within the whole process/program
  3. serve/perform in an advisory capacity
- Indication of your rates
- The representation of your resources available (e.g. access to international data base, etc.)

Your proposals should be delivered

- **On or before 12:00, Wednesday 17 June 1998.**
- To Room 1804A, 240 Vermeulen Street, PRETORIA.
- ***Marked for attention*** - The Transformation Unit, Proposal/ Registration on database with regards to transformation.
- Postal Address: Private Bag X923, PRETORIA, 0001
- For any enquiries please contact **Herman Smith** at 082 465 8684
- Fax number: (012) 323 2561

SARS

Deadly material goes missing (56)

Lax security around radioactive material is putting people at risk of contracting deadly radiation sickness; on average, two consignments of potentially lethal radioactive material go missing each month.

A R1 000 reward was offered yesterday for the return of a box containing deadly radioactive substance which was stolen in a car hijacking in Soweto this week.

If the safety box is opened, people within a 100m radius of the active material – smaller than a one cent coin – could be affected, warned Mark Smith, a spokesman for Unit Inspection, which owns the material.

There is a warning on the missing box of iridium isotope 192.

Last month, a box containing radioactive material went missing from Johannesburg International Airport.

Police told the *Saturday Star* earlier this month that 60 consignments of radioactive material had been reported missing or stolen in the past five years, and that none of these consignments had been located or returned, despite warnings about the dangers. – Staff Reporters

Star 13/6/98

Poverty endangers environment

MS 15/6/98 (56)

Josey Ballenger

POVERTY and apathy were SA's biggest threats to sound environmental management, said a Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) expert.

"The biggest negative issue is that we have many desperately poor people in SA. Poverty is recognised as a fundamental cause of environmental degradation throughout the world," said Pat Manders, CSIR's programme manager of natural resources and rural development.

The second problem was apathy. "I use the term to describe abdication of responsibility, and indifference. As a nation, we are excellent at leaving solutions to others. 'It is about time they did something' is often our rallying cry to inactivity."

A lack of awareness drove this indifference across education levels and socioeconomic backgrounds, Manders said at the recent launch of Rand Water and the Endangered Wildlife Trust's partnership in a community educational programme to promote conservation at the Seekoeivlei wetland in Memel, Free State.

Rand Water donated R200 000 to the trust to manage the project, which will reach out to farmers, communities and children surrounding the internationally recognised wetland, in the next 18 months.

The solution to balancing long-term objectives and urgent social issues was to "look at things differently — and be bold enough to do things differently".

On the positive side, SA had a "long history of protected areas", several conservation organisations and, more recently, intense change in the policy arena.

Mokonyane is determined to clean up Gauteng's act

THE STAR 15/6/98 (56)

She believes every decision has been made to protect the environment

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

If one flies over Johannesburg the city appears to be a veritable oasis of lush green trees, modern skyscrapers and orderly suburbs.

But a closer look reveals that its streets are filthy, the inner city a morass of decay and neglect, rivers overflowing with sewage and waste and the air not fit to breathe.

Johannesburg, with its first world infrastructure, is becoming a clearing house for illegal substances including ivory, rhino horn, cycads and abalone.

To make matters worse, insufficient laws and a lack of manpower to back existing legislation mean that the hands of the authorities are virtually tied when it comes to bringing environmental criminals to book.

> **"We need to turn grey townships into green ..."**

In her 11th floor office in the heart of this metropolis, Nomvula Mokonyane, a petite 36-year-old mother of three is the custodian of this mess.

On her shoulders rests the responsibility of making sure that one of the most industrialised areas in the world – Gauteng – takes responsibility for its environment and natural resources, making sure it is not abused, misused, wasted or polluted.

Mokonyane has only been the MEC of agriculture, conservation and environmental affairs for the past two years but she has already made her presence felt.

She has earned admiration for her efforts in pushing through legislation to make mines legally accountable for pollution caused by unrehabilitated mine dumps and slime dams – but she has also brought down the wrath of environmentalists for disbanding the province's environmental advisory body.

She has been instrumental in changing dumping sites into food gardens for communities but has come under sharp criticism for publicly backing a decision to allow bow-hunting in nature reserves in the province.

She believes every decision made has been for the sole purpose of protecting the environment, not to make friends or gain political clout, while she has promoted efforts to change the attitude of "sheer irresponsibility" by Gauteng residents towards their surroundings.

Born in Kagiso on the West Rand, Mokonyane knows what it is like to live under the burden of constant pollution. Dust from unrehabilitated mine dumps have been a constant source of irritation for residents in the township for years, getting into everything from residents' food to their lungs.

Even in her plush offices in the heart of Johannesburg's CBD there is no respite. Here the problem is right on her doorstep.

"It is heartbreaking to look out of my window. There is dirt everywhere. The dustbins are empty or half-full, yet our streets are littered with dirt. People will throw a cigarette end, cooldrink can or sweet wrapper right next to an empty bin.

THYS DULLAART

Custodian ... Nomvula Mokonyane, Gauteng MEC for agriculture, conservation and environment, has taken on the mammoth task of educating communities on how to preserve and upgrade their environment.

"It's the little things like this that must be changed. Just because we are living in Africa does not mean we have to have poor standards," Mokonyane said.

Mokonyane and her department's task – to right the wrongs being perpetrated against the environment – seems almost insurmountable but she is taking it in her stride and tackling the problem at its roots: trying to change the mindset of the people.

"We need to learn to conserve, we need to rehabilitate our environment so that we can turn a grey township into a green Houghton. Peace and stability goes beyond issues of crime. We have to realise that the environment is an integral part of social development, economic growth and stability," Mokonyane said.

She has placed her hopes on the new environmental bill which she believes will give government the legal backing to come down on individuals and institutions who pollute or abuse natural resources.

She has also set her sights on working with the youth, especially those in the disadvantaged areas to find solutions to long-standing environmental problems.

Evidence of this commitment is the establishment of eco-clubs to address environmental awareness in primary and high schools.

Mokonyane's department has set aside more than R2-million for this programme which will be implemented in Orange Farm, Sebokeng, Meadowlands and Alexandra and will involve about 25 000 pupils.

Although there have been improvements which have impacted positively on the environment, Mokonyane is the first to agree that a great deal more still needs to be done.

Lasting changes can only be realised once every resident in the country – from the humblest street hawker to the wealthiest company executive – realises his or her responsibility to safeguarding the environment.

> We are looking at new policy for the use of clean fuels

> People are suffering from acute respiratory problems

The air we breathe ... Soweto residents seem almost oblivious to the pall of noxious smoke whic ver the area, causing acute medical problems among young and old alike.

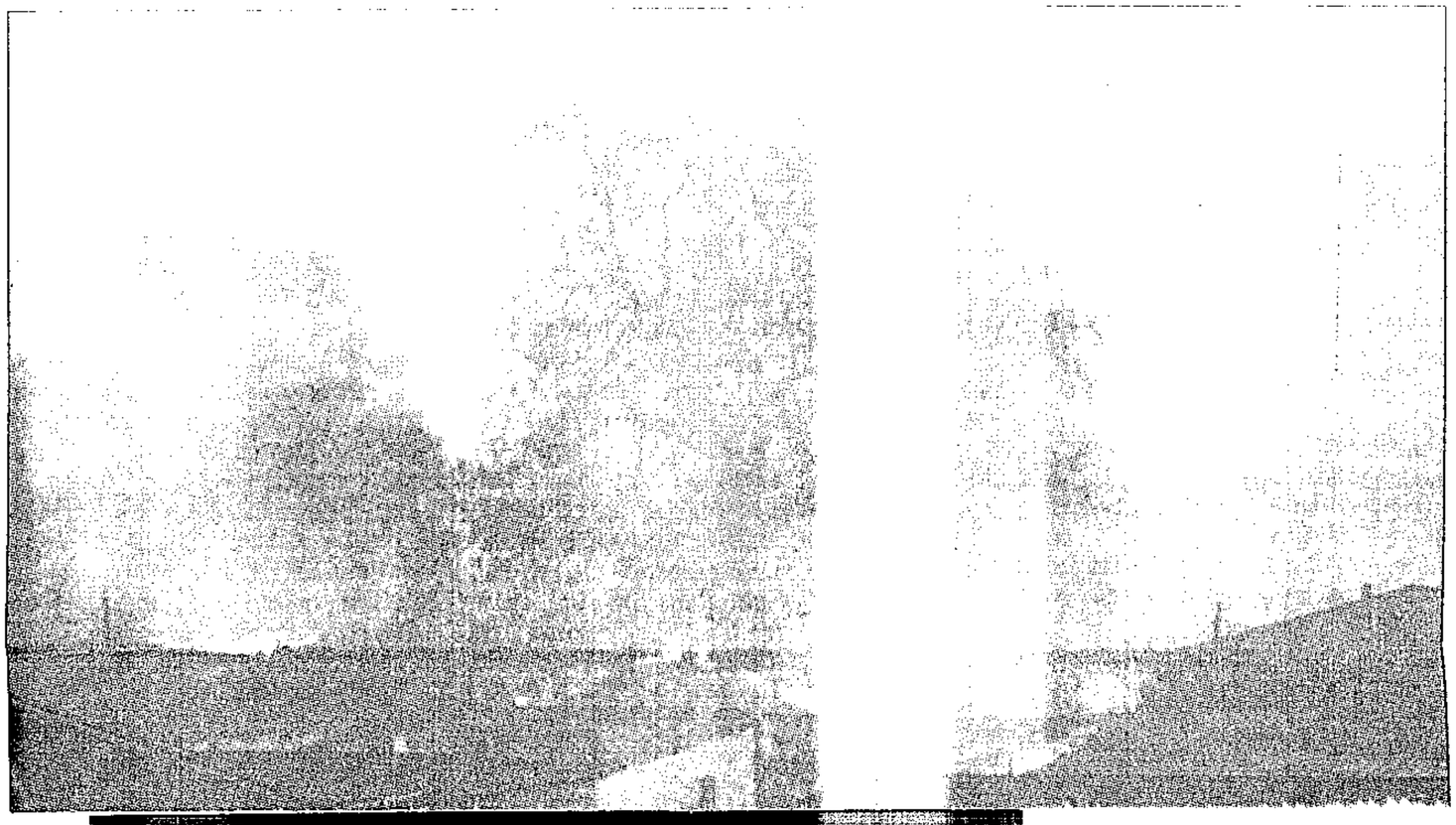
PICTURES: NAASHON ZALK

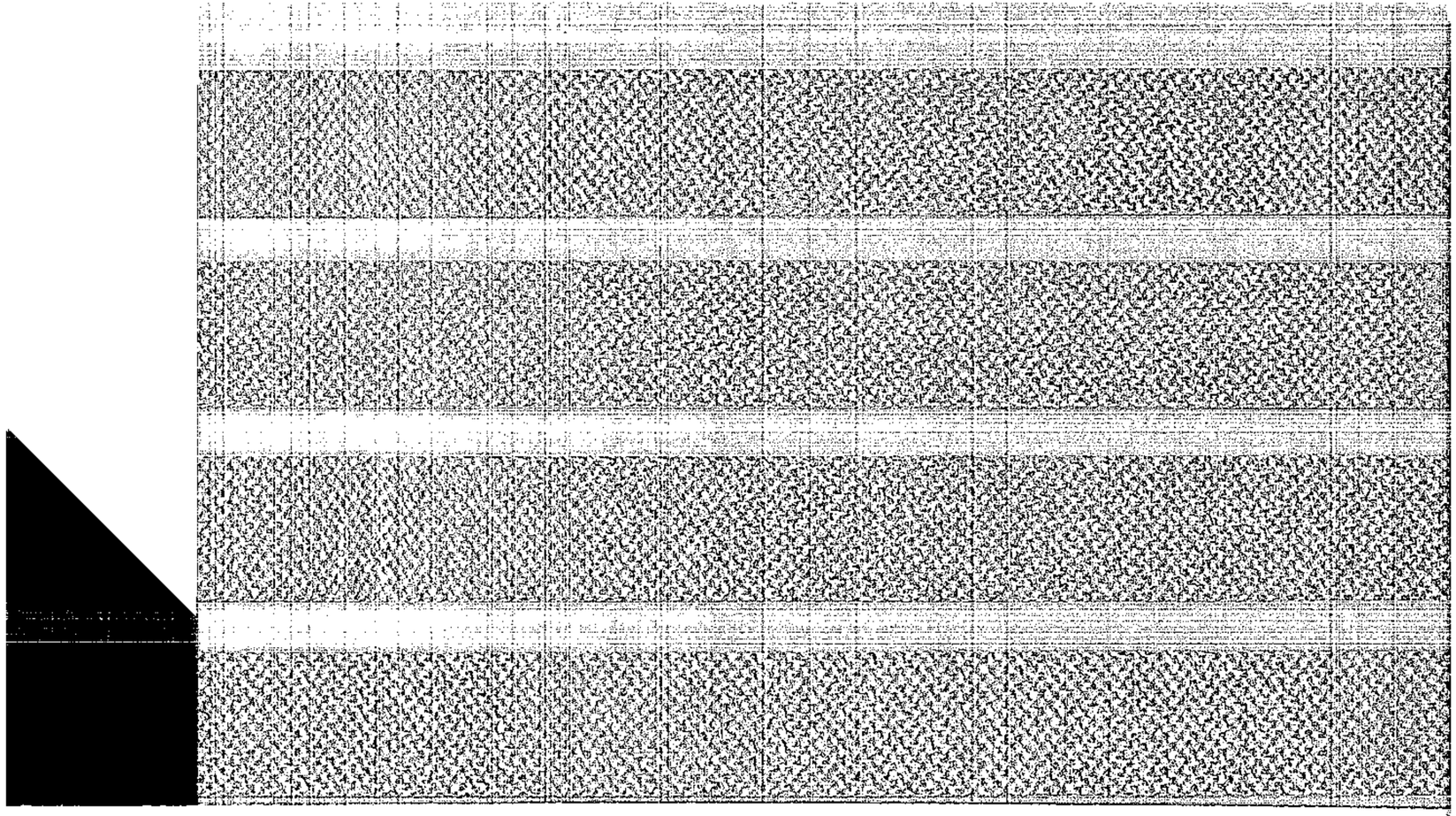
Soweto smoke pollution still 3 times greater than acceptable

(h6)

Star 16/6/98

Alternative sources of fuel are the only solution





By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Soweto residents are living under a pall of smoke, the result of hundreds of coal fires used by residents for warmth and cooking.

Township resident and chairman of the National Association for Clean Air (NACA), Jabu Sithole says: "Sometimes I can hardly see the township because of the layer of pollution. It is especially bad in the mornings.

"Life can become unbearable. Because of the heavy metals in the air people here are destined to suffer from acute respiratory problems.

"I suffer from chronic bronchitis, which I think can be attributed to the pollution."

Hundreds of residents like Sithole, particularly the elderly and the young, suffer from acute respiratory problems because of the high levels of air pollution.

Air pollution from smoke, as well as poisonous dust particles from nearby mine dumps, causes air pollution levels in the township to be three times higher than accepted international standards, according to Professor Harold Annegarm of the Wits Schomland Research Centre.

He is involved in extensive research of pollution in Soweto.

Pollution problems in the township are not new and concern for the long-term effects on residents resulted in a four year study – the Soweto Air Monitoring Project (SAM) – in conjunction with the Government.

The study showed that smoke pollution during the winter months regularly exceeded accepted international standards.

Although the study was completed three years ago, the Environmental Health Offices in the township still conduct weekly air samples at sites in places including Diepkloof, Dhlamini, Meadowlands, Jabavu, Orlando and Ernestville.

"The ultimate solution to the problem would be that people use alternative sources of fuel.

"At the moment, however, there is nothing economically viable as an alternate (source of fuel)," Annegarm said.

The Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs, however, is investigating other options. Joe Asamoah, chief energy specialist for the department, said in 1996 they had introduced a micro scale project to introduce cleaner fuels to residents in the township.

The project was aimed at determining residents' acceptability of the new products.

Last year, however, the department implemented another project, this time in the Free State.

The use of clean fuels by residents of Qalabotjha township in Villiers resulted in a 56% drop in pollution levels.

"We are now looking at developing new policies for the use of clean fuels in townships. Once policy is implemented we could see a reduction in pollution levels in townships," Asamoah said.

CAPE TIMES
TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 1998

CONFUSION, ERROR IN MOCK NUKE ACCIDENT

Koeberg plan 'a disaster'

(56) CT 16/6/98

HEAVEN help us all if last year's simulated nuclear accident at Koeberg — a melt-down more severe than Chernobyl — had been real, reports Metro Editor **CLAUDIA CAVANAGH.**

A REPORT recently released by the Council for Nuclear Safety which monitored last year's simulated nuclear accident at Koeberg highlights a comedy of errors and asks Eskom to address the "deficiencies as a matter of urgency".

It reveals how the direction of the simulated nuclear plume was initially plotted 180° off course by staff in Atlantis, so that instead of emergency teams kicking into action in the Atlantis area, they set to work in the direction of Cape Town, which was at that stage not under threat.

"This meant that all pre-planning was for nothing and the whole strategy for managing the disaster has to be changed," explained Cape Metropolitan Council regional officer for disaster management, Geoff Laskey.

He believes the error occurred when a "visual" of the plume was not faxed through to the relevant office fast enough.

But that's not all that went wrong. According to the report tabled in a CMC executive committee meeting yesterday:

- Only one of the many telephones in the vitally important Central Alarm Station could dial the cellular phones used.
- When, during the incident, another department tried to contact the Council for Nuclear Safety in Pretoria, it discovered a block on the line preventing any calls to be made outside Cape Town
- Personnel contamination checks were not performed or performed inadequately.
- Eskom declared a general emergency nearly an hour after it was expected to. Even though Atlantis was potentially affected at 5.18pm, nothing was done until 6.02pm.
- Some outgoing emergency control centre staffers left their posts before they were relieved by the Emergency Controller.
- Metro ambulances arrived on the scene ready for a medical emergency — 39 minutes after being called — but without any gear for contaminated patients. Medical staff at Tygerberg Hospital were also not ready to handle a "contaminated case".
- After a general emergency had been declared, instructions given to staff members caught in the plume were unclear.
- At one stage, both mass care centres, close to one another, were enveloped by the "plume".

"This leaves no alternative mass care centre for personnel to evacuate to," points out the report.

- The disaster was reported by fax to the SABC but reached the news editor only two hours after it was sent.

Despite all this, the Centre for Nuclear Safety (CNS) says the exercise revealed "no major shortcomings".

Spokesperson Tienie Fourie told the *Cape Times* yesterday that most of the confusion and error could be ascribed to the transfer of responsibility for the emergency plan from the Cape Metropolitan Council to the newly formed Blaauwberg Municipality.

"Remember we're dealing with a completely new bunch of people and an exercise like this is conducted to show up shortcomings so they can be corrected," said Fourie.

"All the things that were wrong have been taken up with people concerned and the plan is being jacked up."

Laskey agreed that the errors were "not significant" and largely due to the change of staff.

"It's the first time they've been exposed to an exercise of this scale. We need as few errors as possible and those made must be attended to," he said. "But once again it's a matter of experience."

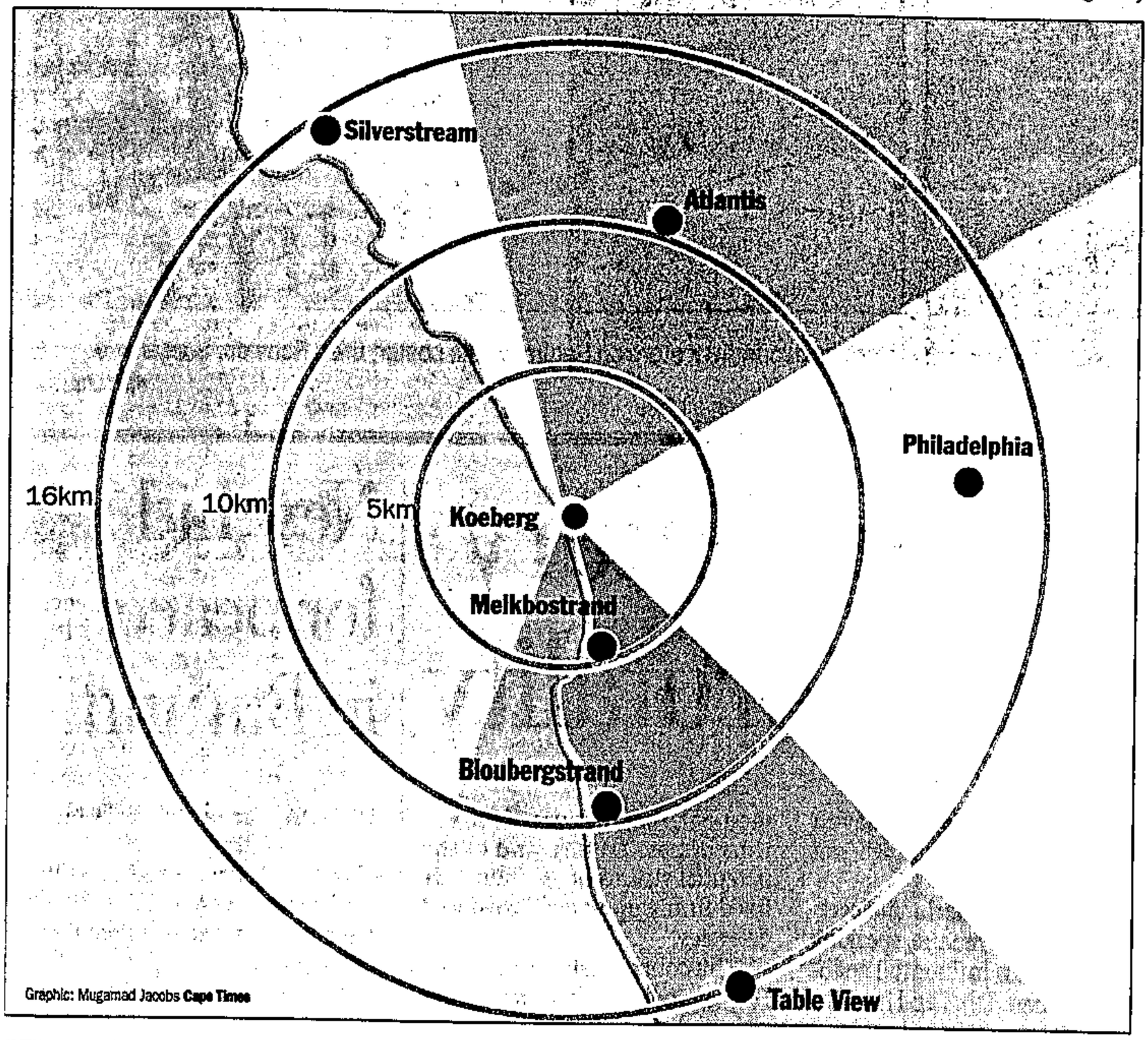
Veteran anti-nuclear lobbyist Mike Kanty was less forgiving.

"This is nothing new. The authorities just can't admit that it's all an impossible affair. The notion of planning for a nuclear emergency is laughable. The only thing the people of Cape Town could do in the event of a nuclear disaster is shelter in their houses. And what about the people living in shacks?

"Had the October 15 incident been real, we'd all have been badly exposed to nuclear fallout and the chances of us surviving to the next millennium would be severely reduced," he said.

Eskom was silent on the matter.

"We are still studying the report and discussing it with the CNS, so we can't comment now," said spokesperson Tony Stott.



SERIOUS SLIP: During a simulated nuclear disaster exercise at Koeberg last year, staff members in Atlantis initially plotted the plume 180° off course. This meant that although the plume was moving northward (the area coloured in red in the diagram) emergency plans were made for the area in green, which was not at that stage in immediate danger.

SA hunting laws need to be reviewed, says NP

Dustin Chick

THE National Party (NP) said yesterday that SA's laws governing the hunting of wild animals — especially the big cats — were vague and inadequate and they should be reviewed.

NP environmental spokesman Wilhelm Le Roux said existing legislation was often counter-productive because it was frequently ignored and "circumvented with impunity".

"Even when there are prosecutions, the sentences handed down are usually absurdly ineffective," Le Roux said.

He said the NP agreed with recommendations in an International Fund for Animal Welfare report on "parliamentary proposals for the special protection of lion, leopard and cheetah" which argued that the present legislation was ineffective.

He said the time had come to act decisively in protecting southern Africa's big cats, which were under serious threat because of increasing human development and growing encroachment on their natural habitats.

Le Roux said that the only long-term hope for the survival of lion, leopard and cheetah would be the establishment of a government trust, a national act of Parliament governing the treatment of carnivores in the provinces and a statutory "big cat commission".

The commission would have wide-ranging powers to monitor and intervene in all aspects of the conservation of these animals.

New measures needed to update current laws included stringent regulations on the capture, transport, control of hunting permits and trade in the big cats.

This was over and above a call for an outright ban on the use of dogs and snares of all descriptions, he said.

FAMILY HOLDS KEY LAND RIGHTS

Loss of vital Cape park link

CT 17/6/98

ENVIRONMENTAL scientists and green groups fear they are watching the vital link in the Peninsula park plan disappear under their noses. **MELANIE GOSLING,** Environment Writer, reports.

A CAPE Town family holds in its hands the vital link between the north and south sections of the Cape Peninsula National Park.

The park, which will conserve Table Mountain and much of the undeveloped land to Cape Point, has been the dream of many Capetonians for decades, and is close to becoming a reality with sections already proclaimed.

But there is a big gap — the Noordhoek/Fish Hoek valley which cuts the future park in half.

Most of the valley is developed, apart from a strip known as the Noordhoek wetlands, which runs along Noordhoek beach to Kommetjie.

The land is owned by the Van der Horst family, and is known as Kommetjie Estates Ltd and Redcliff Property Pty Ltd. The Van der Horsts have had development rights along Noordhoek beach since early this century, including a proposed railway line connecting Fish Hoek to Kommetjie.

It is unlikely that this development would go ahead today in that form, but the rights to develop still exist, says Junior van der Horst.

Van der Horst has now submitted plans to develop Protea Park, a housing development near Wildevoëlvlei, which will eat into the small but critical gap between the north and south sections of the park.

He has also had plans passed by the South Peninsula municipality to develop housing on Klein Slangkop, the headland near Kommetjie. Phase one is being built and phase two has been approved.

Environmental scientists and green groups, who fear they are watching the vital "link" disappear under their noses, have now shouted "Whoa!"

They say that instead of the authorities approving housing developments piecemeal, they should put development on hold, look at the bigger picture, and come up with a holistic plan that will keep sensitive areas like the national park link undeveloped and put the housing where it won't hurt.

One of the strongest voices is a group of international consultants who have been commissioned by the Cape Metropolitan Council to come up with a management plan for the Noordhoek wetlands.

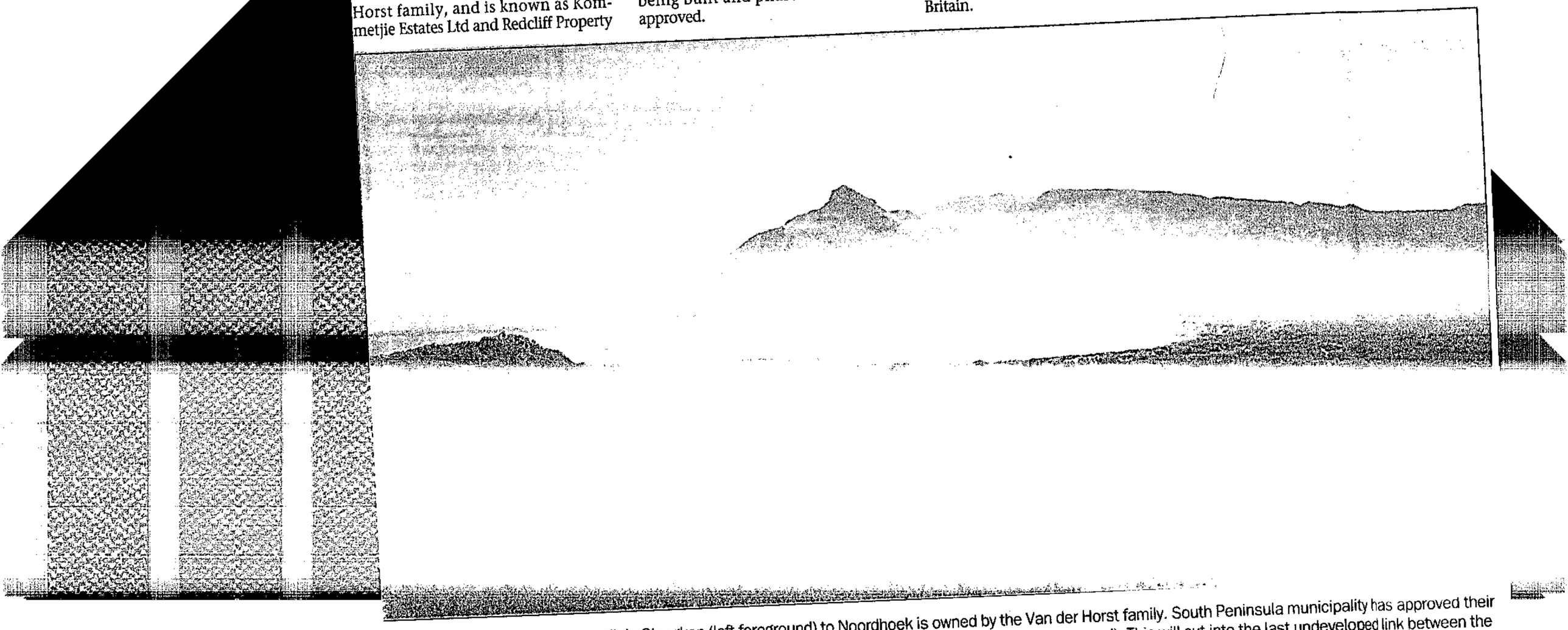
The report is due out in September, but the rush of development proposals and their impact on the wetlands is making it impossible to deliver an accurate report, say consultants KFD Wilkinson and Mott MacDonald, one of the largest consulting firms in Britain.

They have issued an interim report calling on the authorities to introduce a "holding action" on all development proposals in Noordhoek and Kommetjie, or the results would be skewed and the study ineffective, they say.

Professor Bryan Davies of UCT, part of the study team, said yesterday: "Development proposals are flooding in almost weekly. We're trying to design a wetlands management study, but how can organisations make sound environmental decisions while developments, which all have an impact on the wetlands, are happening so rapidly?"

The report says: "Clearly the preservation of this pivotal link between Table Mountain and the Cape of Good Hope is of the utmost importance."

The report also criticises the Klein Slangkop development which it says would destroy the wilderness quality and "one of the most magnificent stretches of unspoiled landscape in the world".



GOING, GOING: All the land from Klein Slangkop (left foreground) to Noordhoek is owned by the Van der Horst family. South Peninsula municipality has approved their building houses on Klein Slangkop, and is considering an application to build Protea Park (middle foreground). This will cut into the last undeveloped link between the south and north section of the Cape Peninsula National Park.

PICTURE: K F D WILKINSON

feared

No housing should be allowed on the north side of Klein Slangkop and the only way to achieve this, the consultants say, would be through trade-offs with the landowners.

They say the link is home to one of the last stands of sandplain fynbos in the Peninsula, among the most seriously threatened vegetation types in the world. Once this is surrounded by houses, it would degenerate into "an urban weed patch".

SA National Parks Board spokesperson Paul Britten said the link was vital from an aesthetic and biological point.

Kommetjie Environmental Awareness Group (KEAG) spokesperson Wally Petersen said the authorities should renegotiate the development of Klein Slangkop with Van der Horst.

"And if the Protea Park development is not stopped, we will lose the link between the north and south sections of the park for ever."

Van der Horst said he accepted the idea of a link between the sections of the park, but did not believe the Protea Ridge development would affect this link.

"There will be ample space to provide a green belt link on Redcliff Properties, the land around Wildevoëlvlei and Imhoff's Gift — provided other landowners are prepared to do the same, in this case the local authority.

"This would link Wildevoëlvlei with Slangkop Ridge above Kommetjie (behind the monastery)."

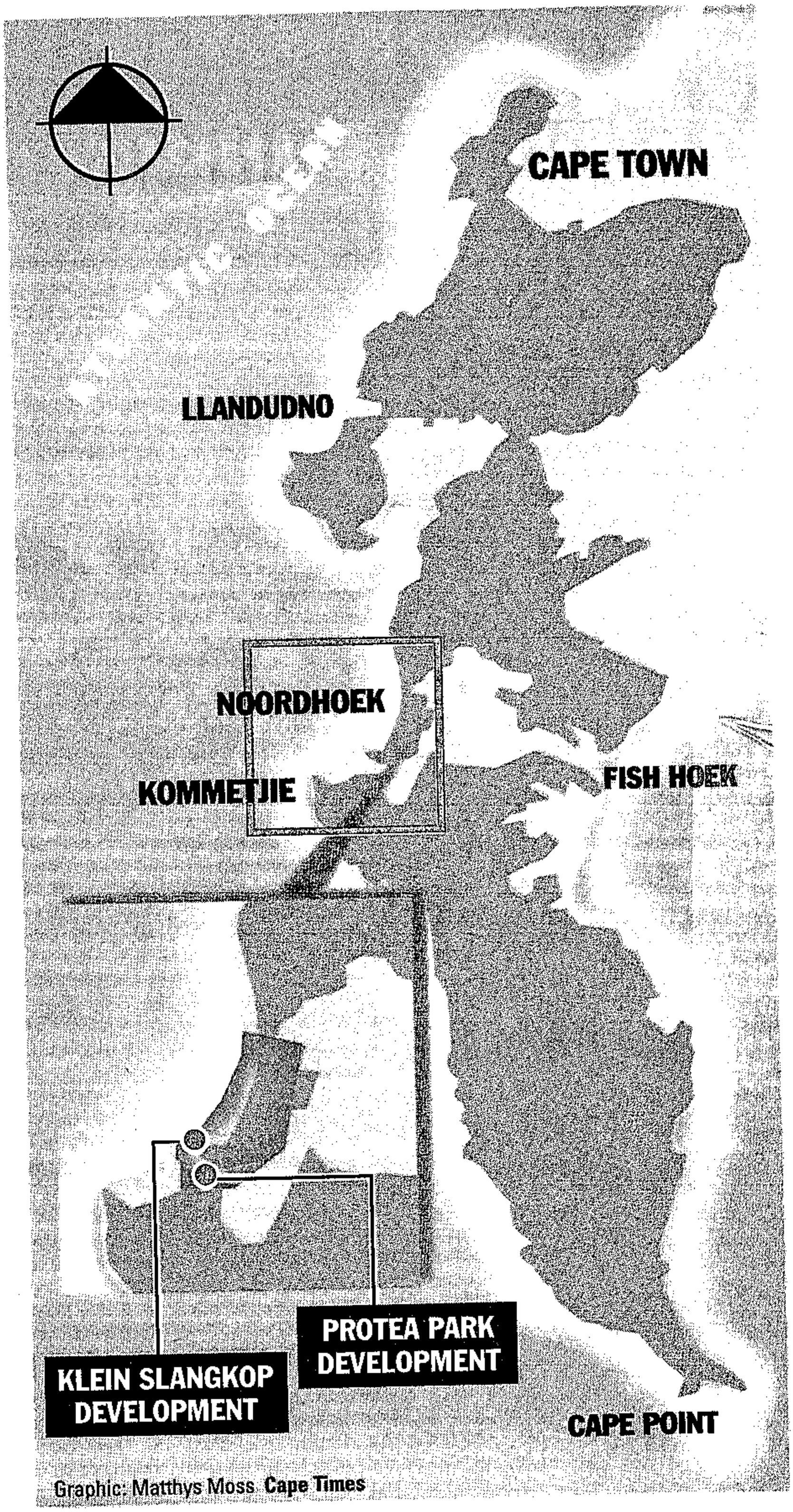
He said there was no chance of his renegotiating the development on Klein Slangkop, nor did he believe it would destroy the visual beauty of the landscape.

"It is an approved development and it's been designed extremely well to fit in with the environment. There's not much connection between the brief given to those consultants to look at the wetlands and their report.

"They go waffling on about what they can see from Chapman's Peak and Monkey Valley while they're sitting drinking their gin and tonics."

Meanwhile, the authorities say they cannot put developments on hold unless there is a specific problem such as how to deal with storm water.

Said South Peninsula Municipality spokesperson Mark Callaghan: "It sounds nice but it's not possible to turn down developments in terms of a moratorium."



Graphic: Matthys Moss Cape Times

VITAL LINK: The green shows the land the South African National Parks hopes to include in the Cape Peninsula National Park. They say it is vital that the north and south sections of the park, which are cut in half by the Noordhoek/Fish Hoek valley, are linked. But most of the land which would link the park is privately-owned. The reddish shaded area shows the land owned by the Van der Horst family, who are developing Klein Slangkop and Protea Park.

MAIL & GUARDIAN
June 19 to 25 1997

MONITOR

A BAROMETER OF GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

The wasted land

(56)

M+G 19-25/6/98

Ann Eveleth

The apartheid-era homeland system and rural "betterment schemes" were the worst causes of land degradation, according to a rapid appraisal of land resources conducted in the run-up to World Desertification Day on Wednesday.

The study forms part of South Africa's National Action Programme to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

The programme was launched by Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Pallo Jordan, Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs Derek Hanekom and Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry Kader Asmal.

Tim Hoffman, the scientist leading the appraisal project, said at least 25% of South Africa's total land area is classified as "severely degraded", and most of this is in the former homelands. This has implications for land reform, as well as the socio-economic standing of rural people.

"In some areas there are 20m deep dongas. People lose livestock when pinnacles of soil collapse and their animals die. They don't want their children to go near the dongas, because they get killed. And the dongas eat away at their land," said Hoffman.

According to Asmal, more than 300-million tons of topsoil are washed away every year. "It takes some 6 000 years for soil to form to the depth of an A4 sheet (30cm). This amount of topsoil could be lost in a one-hour thunderstorm in certain regions ... [Worldwide] every 10 years, an area the size of Czechoslavakia is being turned into a wasteland," he said.

Hoffman said while climatic causes are often blamed for desertification, these are "not a prime factor in South Africa. Here the problem is mainly human factors, and the fact that the most degraded land is found in the former homelands suggests that state policies are to blame."

Too many people living on too little land, betterment schemes that have reorganised communities without consultation, and the migrant-labour system are among the main culprits, Hoffman added.

Most of the degraded land can be reclaimed but the economic feasibility of this "depends on whether the technical, stones-in-dongas approach" of the past continues, or is replaced by a "human solution" which makes people responsible for their land.

Jordan told launch participants that a feasibility study to establish a National Desertification Fund was in the process of being set up.

'People's parks' plan for reserves

W Cape seeks R21-million

(56) ARG 25/6/98

CLIVE SAWYER
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

The Western Cape government is seeking a R21-million investment from the private sector to help it set up affordable "people's parks" in eight prized nature reserves.

The reserves are De Hoop, south of Bredasdorp; Goukamma on the Garden Route; Cederberg; Swartberg in the Little Karoo; Hottentots Holland; Kogelberg, about 5 km from Kleinmond; Assegaaibosch near Stellenbosch; and Jonkershoek.

The project was announced by Hennie Bester, provincial Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism, in an address to an investor conference in Hamburg, Germany.

Mr Bester said the eight reserves had been chosen because they offered visitors the most recreational opportunities or ought to be more accessible.

"The emphasis is not on providing luxury accommodation."

He said R21,84-million was needed for accommodation, service roads, rest camps, ablution blocks and restaurants.

According to a Cape Nature Conservation report, it was not possible at this stage to calculate the costs of any planning, engineering or architectural services.

Cape Nature Conservation had decided that for the future of the reserves to be secured, they would have to be made more accessible and that greater material benefits would have to be passed on to local communities.

"This implies that the development of an infrastructure for local and foreign tourists must receive priority."

Cape Nature Conservation figures showed that the Western Cape's financial obligations to Nature Conservation could be cut significantly if the new statutory board to be set up was able to use and manage the province's fixed assets more cost effectively.

Mr Bester told the conference that with state funding for conservation dropping from R22 a ha in 1982 to just R2 a ha this financial year, the Western Cape was transforming Cape Nature Conservation into a statutory board.

With the help of grants from the province, the board would be responsible for its own wellbeing and for generating income.

The Western Cape was the "winning province" of South Africa and the number one region in the future of the sub-continent. There was great potential for growth in tourism, which now attracted more than half of all overseas visitors to South Africa.

"With a resolve to work hard and provide spectacular service, we should be able to snatch a sizeable share of the world's $62-billion tourism industry by 2010."

'Loopholes in Pallo's environmental bill'

Star 26/6/98 (56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Environmental groups have accused Minister of Environmental Affairs Pallo Jordan of pushing through the new draft National Environment Management Bill in an attempt to have it gazetted before next year's election.

The draft bill, approved by the Cabinet on Wednesday, will be brought before Parliament for consideration at the end of July.

Chris Albertyn, national coordinator for the Environmental Justice Networking Forum – a network of 550 environmental bodies – said yesterday the bill could have been a lot stronger, and although its broad principles and intentions were good, it contained many loopholes.

Albertyn said the entire process had started about three years ago but had been stalled by Jordan and his deputy Peter Mokaba. "It has also been unfortunate that ministers Mokaba and Jordan did not have a hands-on participation in the process," he said.

The draft bill is based on the Department of Environmental Affairs' vision for "a society in harmony with its environment".

"The policy seeks to unite the people of South Africa in working towards a society where all people have sufficient food, clean air and water, and decent homes and green spaces in their neighbourhoods that will enable them to live in spiritual, cultural and physical harmony with their natural surroundings."

But one of the main concerns voiced by environmental organisations is that no provision has been made for a formal co-operation partnership between the Government, business, labour, communities and environmental organisations.

Jessica Wilson from the Group for Environmental Monitoring said: "There were only two real mechanisms in which people could participate. The first is the National Environmental Advisory Council, while the second is the ability by people to take the Government to court and challenge them on their role in implementing the bill. But here people must have access to lawyers and a good understanding of their rights."

Environmental groups believe that the draft bill does not make provision for a body which has the power to call the Government to account.

R5,2m boost for marine park

CHRIS BATEMAN CT 26/6/98 (56)

A CASH boost of R5,2 million to train local hiking guides and identify a large new marine park in the Cape Peninsula National Park was announced yesterday.

The money, the latest major cash injection to combat alien vegetation on the Table Mountain range, came from the French Global Environmental Facility.

In a joint announcement, the French facility and SA National Parks said the money would go towards sustainable development of the Peninsula park, especially through training programmes for disadvantaged local communities.

The most obvious development will be a new environmental training centre at Orange Kloof, where hiking guides and conservators will be moulded after being drawn from local disadvantaged communities.

The announcement said the French contribution would also help small businesses to develop tourism-related projects, to contract to clear alien vegetation and undertake park management for the Peninsula Park.

The funding would contribute to bi-lateral research in fire prevention and control, tourism flux management and botanical conservation.

Ian Macdonald, South Africa's chief executive officer for the World Wide Fund for Nature, said the Peninsula park, with its vast tracts of mountain fynbos, pristine coastline and craggy landmarks, had now become "one of the most exciting national parks in the world".

Of the marine park study, he said: "We realised that we couldn't just focus on terrestrial systems; we should also concentrate on our amazing diversity of marine life."

The Peninsula park has more plant species than a comparable area in the tropical rain forests.

The Tsoga Environmental Centre in Langa will be in partnership with the Peninsula park for the four years it takes to implement the project.

Nearly R50m has been earmarked for conserving the Peninsula's mountain and marine environment over the next five years, much of which will come from the Washington-based Global Environmental Facility.

MAIL & GUARDIAN
June 26 to July 2 1998

M+G 26/6 – 2/7/98

'Canned' lions: SA's newest export?

~~M+G 26/6~~ (56)

Fiona Macleod

Animal-welfare groups were scrambling madly this week to prevent Roy Plath, a central figure in the "canned" lion-hunting scandal, from exporting 17 lions to a hunting operation in Mozambique.

Plath has sold the lions to a professional hunter, André Booysen and his father-in-law, Dick de Villiers, who own a farm called Pandane in the Inhambane province. The deal has the approval of the governor of the province.

After the exposure of the "canned" lion industry last year, the hunting of lions bred in captivity was banned in Mpumalanga, where Plath's game farm, Marlothi, is situated. Plath has been putting pressure on the Mpumalanga conservation authorities to allow him to resume hunting his lions, but they have refused.

Hunting of captive-bred cats is permitted in Mozambique, and authorities there say they are aware Booysen is trying to circumvent the Mpumalanga regulations by importing the lions. They are worried that other hunting operators may want to follow suit.

Plath this week denied the lions are going to Mozambique for hunting purposes. The Mpumalanga authorities who gave him permits to export them say they will be going to a new reserve of some 15 000ha in Inhambane, and will have a better life there.

These are the same authorities who granted a permit for the shooting of a lioness on Plath's farm which horrified the world when it was flighted on the international TV documentary, *The Cook Report*.

Video footage showed the middle-aged lioness being separated from her three cubs and shot up against an electric fence.

Plath had told the authorities the lioness was old, no good for breeding, aggressive and he didn't have the space to keep her. They investigated charges of fraud against him, but the attorney general declined to prosecute.

Kobus Raath, a former National Parks Board veterinarian now in private practice, was asked by Booysen to give the required clearance for the lions going to Mozambique and to accompany them in transit. But because of the controversy surrounding Plath, he decided this week to pull out. "I've worked hard to build up a good reputation, and I don't want to mess it up," he said.

Gareth Patterson, South Africa's "lion man", and officials from the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the Society for the Protection of Animals, and the Front for the Liberation of Animals and the Conservation of Nature are putting pressure on authorities at provincial and national level to stop Plath exporting the lions.

But it was the Mozambican authorities who put a spanner in the works this week. Bonito Sensão, chief warden of anti-poaching, refused to allow the lions into the country until he knew more about Booysen's management plans.

Sensão is chiefly concerned about how Booysen will feed the lions, and how he will prevent them from eating people. "Booysen says he will feed them with goats. But people here are dying of hunger. It's not good politically to feed lions with goats when people are hungry.

"It is not necessary to introduce new lions to Mozambique," he added. "We have lots of lions here. If they want lions, they can move them from somewhere else in Mozambique. We don't need any from outside."

After meeting Booysen in Maputo this week, Sensão forwarded his application to the minister of agriculture and fisheries, who has the power to give it the go-ahead.

In the meantime, the pressure on the South African authorities to intervene continues.

Nature body in the red

(16)

Cash-strapped conservation department faces its biggest-ever crisis

ST (CM) 28/6/98

CHARL DE VILLIERS

ONLY politicians can now rescue the Western Cape's ailing conservation department which is battling its greatest funding crisis ever, provincial Environment Minister Mark Wiley said this week.

By tomorrow, the department has to show the provincial treasury how it plans to shave at least 20 percent off its operating budget of R19-million to meet an R8,8-million shortfall on salaries.

The anticipated cuts could, however, be as high as 53 percent.

"It is a crisis situation," Wiley said on Thursday, adding: "The reality is that a statutory board (for nature conservation) is becoming more and more urgent."

He said Cape Nature Conservation was no longer an effective conservation agency, its resources were run down and staff were having difficulty coping.

CNC chief Dr Kas Hamman said the threatened cuts would have serious impacts on tourism and environmental management. While it was too early to spell out the exact implications of a 20 percent cut in operational spending, it was apparent that smaller reserves would have to be closed "and there will be dramatic down-scaling in other areas of responsibility".

Wiley said that as a parastal, statutory board, CNC would be able to accept private sponsorships instead of being wholly dependent on state funding.

He is backed by provincial Trade and Tourism Minister Hennie Bester, who this week told European businessmen that such a board had to be set in place by law before R21,84-million could be privately invested in six of the Western Cape's most promising reserves.

A statutory conservation board has been in the legislative pipeline for the past six months, but its passage has been plagued by wrangling.

The chairman of the standing committee dealing with the draft law, National Party MPL Jean-Pierre Gerber, said the CNC Board Bill could be finalised when the provincial parliament reconvened in a month's time.

"It's still on track, but if we don't get it through by the end of the next parliamentary semester, we might as well forget about it," Gerber said.

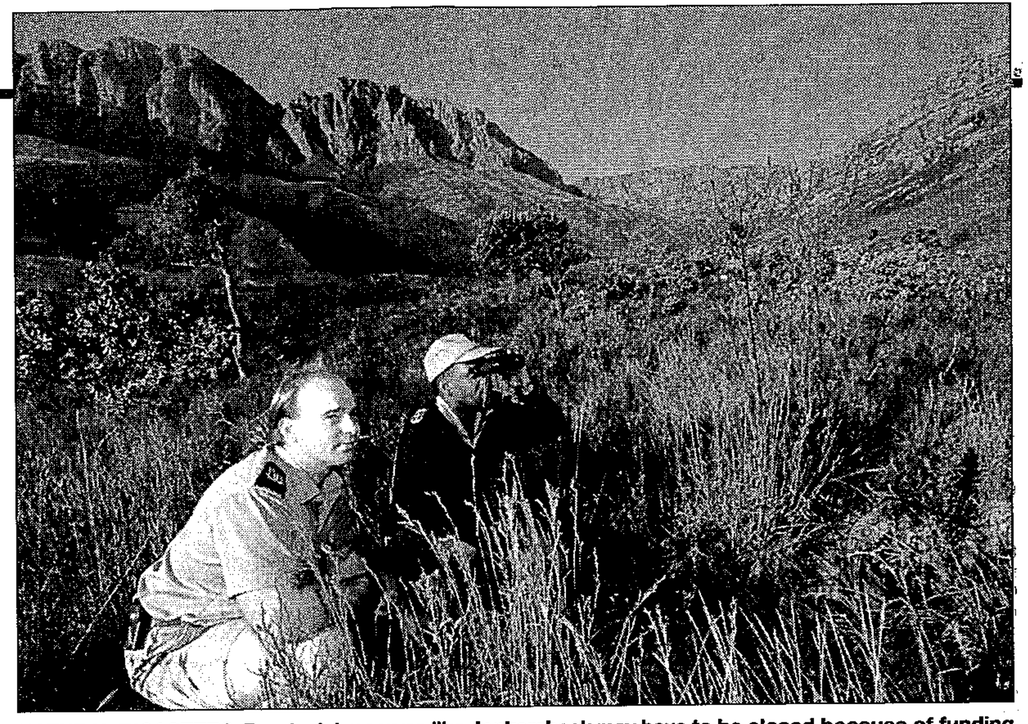
Wiley said he could not influence the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Tourism and Lotteries as the Bill was "the committee's property".

"The Bill had not been referred back to the department since May and, as far as I'm concerned, the matter goes as fast or slowly as the chairman or the committee wants it to go.

"The reality, however, is that a statutory board is becoming more and more urgent. We are shifting money around to keep head above water. It is a crisis situation," Wiley said.

CNC sources warned that any further squeeze on funding could result in the Cederberg and Groot Winterhoek wilderness areas having to be closed to the public because they could not be patrolled and protected against veld fires.

"There were 35 fires in the Cederberg last year, and just one of them cost us R700 000 in overtime and helicopter charges. We can't afford another fire like that this year," a source said.



NATURAL DISASTER?: Provincial reserves like Jonkershoek may have to be closed because of funding cuts. CNC staffers Patrick Shone, left, and Elias Cekiso hope not Picture: AMBROSE PETERS

Environmental bill to give government more clout

Josey Ballenger (56) BD 30/6/98

THE environmental affairs department's limited authority in obstructing "insensitive" development of SA's coastline, particularly the treasured Garden Route, had prompted the department to initiate a policy programme for coastal management, Minister Pallo Jordan said yesterday.

"I have been inundated with petitions and letters from the public requesting my intervention to halt environmentally insensitive coastal development."

Jordan pointed to a golf course development above the Knysna Lagoon, where conditions for protecting the environment were attached to its approval, but were ignored, as an example.

However, the department had limited powers to intervene when local or provincial authorities approved environmentally undesirable developments.

While the draft environmental management bill, soon to be gazetted, would "significantly enhance" government's ability to protect the environment, an overarching national policy framework concerning coastal development was still needed.

The department was compiling a discussion document to be widely distributed for comment in July, which would provide a basis for a white paper to be submitted to Jordan by the end of the year.

Rubbish mountain could tip us into smelly future

Fairest Cape Association seeks solution

(56) ARG 1/7/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Imagine how much space is needed to store 3,5 million one-litre bottles of soft drink and then multiply that by 365.

That is the area required to contain the amount of waste that Cape Town residents dump in landfills each year, says Fairest Cape Association chief executive Jenny de Tolly.

She warns that the city is fast running out of suitable landfill space.

The association, which is a non-government, non-profit organisation, aims to promote a cleaner and healthier environment in the Cape metropolitan area by encouraging and enabling people to take responsibility for their waste.

Writing in the association's annual report, Ms De Tolly said 3 500 tons of waste were delivered to the six landfill sites in the metropolitan area each day and it was estimated this was increasing by 15% a year.

"If each ton of waste occupies about a cubic litre of space, the total amount of waste every day would be the equivalent of 3,5 million litre bottles of Coke.

"So each day of the year, that amount of space is filled up with what our society is throwing away ... (and) it is doubling every five years.

"These would be interesting but theoretical facts if it were not that we are fast running out of landfill space.

"Finding sites which meet environmental and legal requirements and which are acceptable to the surrounding population, is not easy."

Ms De Tolly said it was vital for waste reduction and the recovery of resources from the waste – together called "integrated waste management" – to be taken seriously.

This was because of the lack of suitable landfill space, the increasing financial and environmental costs of waste disposal and the diminishing amount of natural resources. "We are glad to report that in 1997 some advances were made towards the implementation of integrated waste management," she said.

At a national level there were the first steps towards implementing a waste management policy through the publication of the Government's White Paper on Integrated Pollution Control.

"The White Paper should lead to legislation and action strategies, which will have to be carefully monitored in order to ensure that waste minimisation is included and not sidelined, as it has tended to be."

Locally, the association was co-ordinating a training course to help waste managers understand the principles involved in integrated solid waste management.

"The course is producing exciting results in that it has built a common understanding of what we could and should be doing," Ms De Tolly said.

ENVIRONMENT AFFAIRS 'MY FIRST LOVE'

Wiley may be the green man Western Cape needs

CT 1/7/98 (56)

HE is probably the only SA politician who hacked out alien vegetation before he got his post. Environment MEC Mark Wiley could be the green man the province needs. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

"TOURISTS don't come to the Cape to see housing developments. They come to see our natural environment. The Century Cities, wine estates and waterfronts are extras, but you'll never find a single foreign visitor flying here to visit them. We need to educate people about that."

This sentiment is not new, but what makes one sit up and take notice is that it was said by a politician — and a Nat at that.

Mark Wiley, who took up his post as MEC for Community Policing and Environment Affairs in May, is the fourth MEC to hold the environment portfolio this year, after Meiring, Olckers and Morkel. But he is surely the first to say: "I spend a huge amount of time on my other porfolio, but my first love is Environment Affairs."

Wiley called a press conference yesterday to outline his environmental management plans for the Western Cape, and invited representatives of about 16 green NGOs to attend.

This in itself is new. For so long South African politicians have viewed the green lobby as antagonists, a group that got in the way of the real world, but one that could be politically inconvenient and needed careful management.

Wiley said yesterday: "We live in the rarest environment in this country, but without the support of NGOs we won't win the conservation battle in this province."

He was on first-name terms with many of them, and while that might be dismissed simply as his being a good politician, it appeared from his discussions with the NGOs that he shared their sentiments on most issues they raised.

Most Nat politicians have a heavy bias towards built-environment development, and the Western Cape government has pushed through some of the most controversial developments in the face of fierce public opposition, like Saldanha Steel at Langebaan and Sparrebosch at Knysna.

In the short time since he took up office, Wiley has turned down two developments in the Peninsula that did not come up to scratch environmentally.

He also doesn't appear to be in bed with the industrialists, and tackled Saldanha Steel's managing director Bernard Smith on pollution last week.

"Smith's attitude was that he makes sure his pollution is within bounds and that's all. But I said to him, 'What happens when your smoke mixes with Namaqua Sands and Alpha Cement and together it goes over the acceptable limit? How will you know whose smoke it is then?'"

He is concerned about the Saldanha region, and supports the founding of an Environmental Monitoring Trust Fund to which all large industries contribute. This would pay for a monitoring committee to be a watchdog over the area.

He also plans to:

- Create a provincial department of environment to deal with "brown" environmental issues of pollution control, sustainable development, impact management and coastal management.
- Form an environmental multi-stakeholders' forum to review draft national and provincial policy and to help identify environmental concerns of the public.
- Develop a state of the environment report for the province to form the basis of an environmental action plan.
- Develop a provincial environmental policy as an adjunct to the national policy.
- Develop legislation to put a provincial environmental commissioner in place.

Wiley is determined that nature reserves and parks must be accessible to all the public, and not just be elitist playgrounds for the rich.

HIS HEART'S IN THE JOB: It's pointless making any planning legislation if you don't put environmental issues at the heart of it, says new MEC for Environment Affairs Mark Wiley.

PICTURE: GARTH STEAD

Toxic waste finds safe dump

(56)

MtG 3-9/7/98

Swapna Prabhakaran

A quiet and mostly unseen battle has been raging for months around KwaZulu-Natal's waste dumps.

Two waste dumps were officially closed down last year and another collapsed in a disaster that left the province with a hazardous waste-disposal crisis.

The chaos began after floods and mudslides last September wreaked havoc with the province's dump sites. The spring rains caused major damage at the Bulbul Drive hazardous-waste site, situated in the southern suburb of Chatsworth in Durban.

The site collapsed after the heavy rains and tons of decomposing waste slid into the surrounding valley, threatening to slide down into the Umlaas Rriver.

No one died as a result of the ensuing pollution, but it was enough to spark a panic in environmental circles. Hasty reinforcements were built to shore up the walls that contain waste at the province's remaining dump sites.

Pressure has since been mounting to find safer alternative dumping grounds.

This month a much-needed dump area has opened in Shongweni, bringing relief to environmentalists and waste-disposal crews alike.

The site is called Cell C, and is equipped to handle low to medium hazardous wastes. It is the third phase of waste-disposal company Enviroserv's 10-year landfill plans in the area.

Rufus Maruma, the non-executive CEO of Enviroserv Holdings, says the site brings new hope for waste-disposal services in the province.

"Cell C in Shongweni marks the beginning of the end of the war against waste," he says.

For the past nine months hazardous waste was shipped to other provinces at great cost to be dumped safely and legally.

Some types of "low toxicity" wastes were disposed of at a site in Bisasar Road, Clare Estate, a suburb of Durban, even though the site was not built to deal with hazardous wastes.

There have also been fears that the lack of an official local dumping site might lead to unscrupulous and illegal dumping in vacant lots, creating a danger to the public.

But the danger has been averted with the opening of Cell C. A variety of low and medium hazardous wastes can now be stored cheaply and safely at Shongweni.

Rufus Maruma: 'This marks the beginning of the end of the war against waste.' PHOTO: JEEVA RAJGOPAUL

The general manager of the landfill, Clive Gibb, says the 1,6-million cubic metre site will take 10 years to fill up with waste, and then a further 30 years to "rehabilitate" until it is fit for public use. Until then, it will just be a large and carefully monitored dumping ground.

Situated in a steep, narrow valley in the middle of sugar cane farmlands, the dump disturbs nobody with its unsightliness or its inevitable odours.

"Our nearest neighbour is a chap who runs a bed-and-breakfast establishment 3km away," says Gibb. "He was very nervous about the dump, but once he'd come and had a look at what it is we do here, and understood it, he became one of our greatest fans."

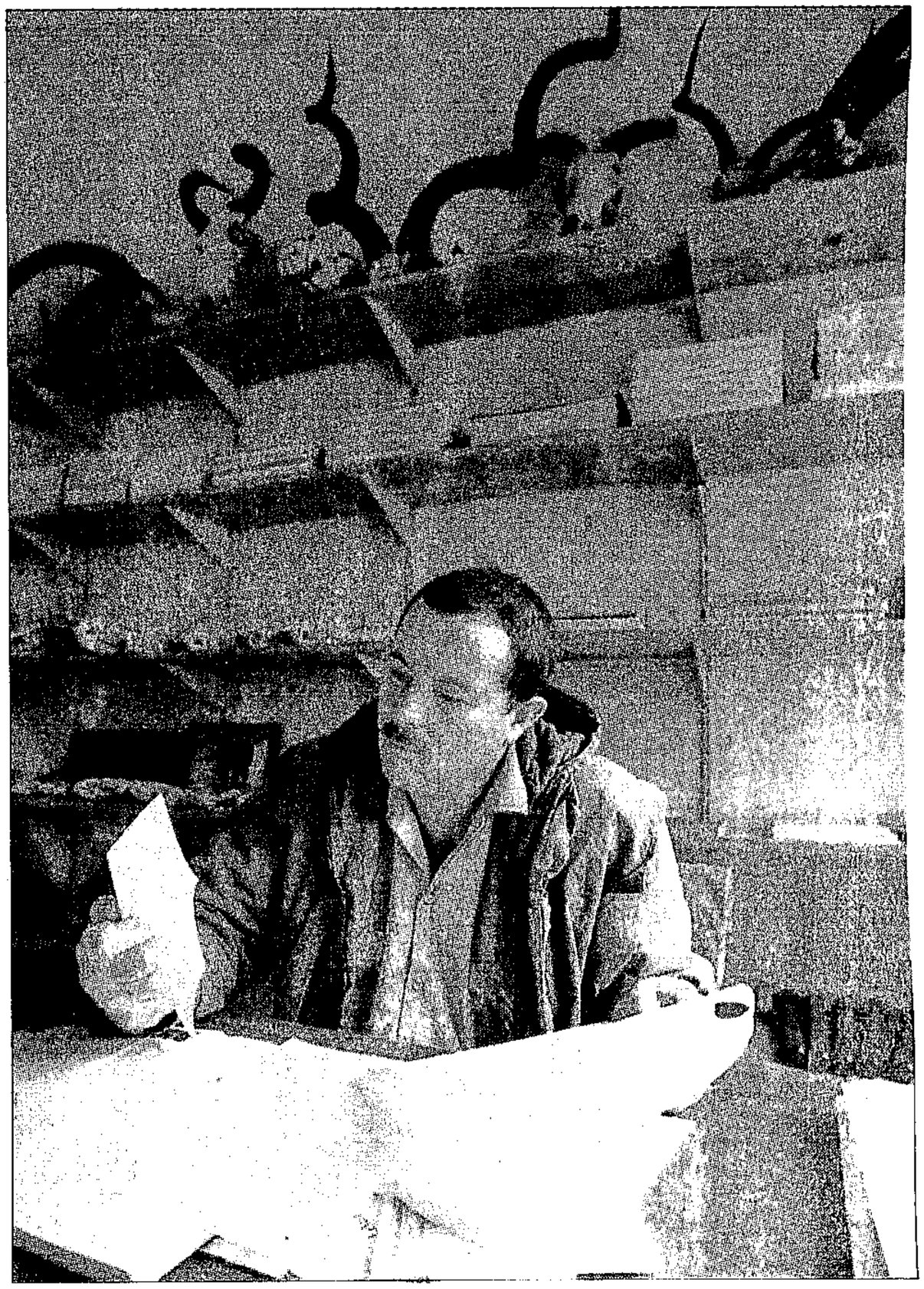
Certainly the dump is almost invisible from the surrounding areas. Despite its formidable size, it is difficult to spot, even from the dirt road that leads directly to the dump.

Environserv has taken measures to ensure that the new site will not follow the disastrous footsteps of the Bulbul Drive site. Gibb says engineers have introduced a rougher texture to the synthetic material that lines the Cell C site. The wall that keeps the waste in place — much like a dam wall — has been built 8m higher than usual, just in case there's future trouble with floods.

It's war in the park as rangers await next assault

Armed to the teeth, the poachers will stop at nothing to get at lucrative prey

By HANS PIENAAR



Kruger Park ranger Don English's blood ran cold as he read the note: "Don't ask for a transfer," was the warning sent to him from Barberton Maximum Prison, "we want to pay you a visit, and if we don't get you we'll take your family and chop them up like dogs."

The letter was written by a poacher snared by English, head of the Tshokwane section of the park's anti-poaching unit, and had passed the jail's censors. "There's a new government," it began, "and once Mandela releases us, we'll come and get you."

But English was one step ahead. He had informants in the same jail, and soon they let him know: the plan was for the poacher's cronies to plant landmines on the dirt road leading to English's house in the park and lure him out by firing shots into the air.

The ranger told the police, and the gang was arrested. Handgrenades and mines to be used in the attack were found in their possession. They got hefty sentences, and today the photograph of the small arsenal is tacked to a wall in English's office.

If this sounds like war, it is because it is one: "Where there's conservation, there's poaching," observes English's father Mike, who retired recently after 30 years as a ranger. And armed poaching has been with the Kruger Park since its inception in the 1920s.

But since the early 90s, poaching has entered into a new, ultra-violent phase in which military weapons and tactics are used. Perhaps the greatest sign of a war going on is the informer system along military lines set up by English and Jack Greeff, a former major with 1 Reconnaissance Unit and an Angolan bush-war veteran who now heads security at Welgevonden game reserve near Vaalwater.

Currently the rangers are in the ascendancy, but English has been in the war long enough to know this is the calm before the storm – soon the next crop of poachers will have served their sentences.

Robin Fisher, head of the anti-poaching section of an auxiliary civilian volunteer organisation called the Honorary Rangers, says there is a crisis looming. The mere fact that the permanent rangers have become dependent on the Honorary Rangers for anti-poaching equipment bears this out.

Greeff's analysis is that the "ordinary crime market" – hijackings, burglaries and heists – will soon become saturated, and that the next obvious target is "illegal meat"; that is, meat from poached animals. Around the Kruger Park there are already several butcheries that supply such meat.

And there is a soaring market for anything that carries the label "rare", or could be used in Asian traditional medicine. The current fad in Germany is to keep poisonous animals in lounge tanks; and a rare Western Cape beetle's hind legs will fetch a cool R18 000 in Asian medicine markets.

Because of budgetary constraints, there are just enough rangers to keep poaching down to manageable levels. And they are so under-equipped that rangers sometimes have to go on patrols barefoot and without radios to order backup from headquarters if they walk into an ambush.

The poaching industry knows how precarious the situation is, which has made them more brazen. Among some rangers there is a fear that in years to come there will be a full-scale assault on parks in South Africa, with bribery playing its part to destroy the wildlife structures in the same way it did elsewhere in Africa.

There are other fears too: "To me it is just a matter of time before a tourist bumps into a poacher and either gets hijacked or shot," says Fisher. The new poachers are often all-rounders – they have earned their stripes in other violent crimes, such as hijackings and cash-in-transit heists.

It has already happened that tourists stumbled upon a carcass being stripped, with the poachers calmly continuing with their work. "What would have happened if they had decided to shoot? There are just too many people in the park with firearms who shouldn't be there," says Fisher.

There was one scene that could have come from a movie: a car chase through the middle of the park with rangers and poachers firing on each other – and after the poachers were forced off the road, they tried to lay a charge of attempted murder.

The statistics Fisher quotes are convincing enough. This year the park has already lost six rhinos, making a total of 66 since 1989, and a whopping 311 elephants. In his account of the dozens of incidents over the past year or so, two things stand out: the skill of the poachers, and their armaments.

Arms from caches buried during the civil war in neighbouring Mozambique are in plentiful supply: rocket launchers, landmines, mortars and handgrenades are regularly found on poachers. It is not too far-fetched to imagine some of rockets being used against tracking helicopters.

The poachers get the weapons in Mozambique, enter the park and bury them in caches for use during poaching operations. Since 1990 there have been 59 incidents in which AK-47s have been involved.

The driving force behind poaching is undoubtedly the desperate conditions in Mozambique, the poorest country on earth. The unemployed in villages along the eastern border of the Kruger Park number 2 million, and along the western border, 4 million.

In earlier years, recalls English, there was no poaching because the Mozambican Shangaans were bushcraft masters and hunting was a skill used sparingly. But the civil war brought the AK-47 and the R-1, and soldiers with no other skill besides flipping guns on to automatic.

The new breed of poachers are well motivated financially. Their masters can supply them with the best equipment, including spotlights powered from batteries on their backs that are charged in daytime by solar cells. They won't hesitate to shoot at or ambush rangers, and even booby-trap carcasses with grenades.

(56) Star 4/7/98

THREATENING LETTER: Kruger National Park ranger Don English looks at a letter containing threats against him and his family in his office at Tshokwane near Skukuza. It is here that he runs a military-style informer network that has helped in the ongoing and escalating poaching war

SLAUGHTER FOR EASTERN BUYER: Kruger National Park rangers look at a rhino killed by poachers. So far this year, six of the animals, prized in the East for the medicinal qualities of their horn, have been killed in the park and surrounding reserves

Photographs: CAROLINE SUZMAN, KNP

When humans are getting poached too, Africa needs to look at a military solution

By **HANS PIENAAR**

One day, former Kruger National Park ranger Jack Greeff smelt something coming from a hut in Mozambique, where he was on a counter-poaching operation. Believing it to be the nose bone of a dead rhino, which causes a terrible stink, he ordered his men to enter.

The walls were covered in blood, and they found a decomposed human shoulder in a cupboard. Digging in the floor, a human head emerged. Some weeks later they captured the poacher, and he spilt the beans: Yes, he also poached humans, as it were, and sold their parts to muti agents in South Africa and Mozambique.

Poaching in Africa is no longer a matter of small-time local hunters feeding their hungry children. It has become big business, integrated into organised-crime networks all over the world, and aided by the breaking down of international barriers dictated by globalisation.

The criminal switches roles constantly: "The man who kills rhino is the same man who smuggles guns or drugs, is the same man who collects diamonds and gold on the mines, the same one who collects miners' wives in Mozambique to bring back to South Africa," says Greeff.

Poaching, Greeff believes, is driven all over Africa by military groups on the loose, forced to fend for themselves in neighbouring countries where the political will is often lacking to drive them out.

He tells of caravans of 200 camels in Garamba Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The meat, of which each camel carries about 300kg, is dried and cut into matchstick-length pieces, and sold in far-away Sudan.

Nobody dares to report the Sudan People's Liberation Army rebels riding the camels. The perception is that Congolese President Laurent Kabila has "given" the SPLA the park in reward for their help in bringing down former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

Greeff believes that conservation in Africa, where 80% of the countryside has no infrastructure or lacks central government control, is a military problem, and therefore the solution has to be military.

In Mozambique, for instance, while Renamo and Frelimo were fighting, there was no poaching in the Kruger Park. But as soon as the peace agreement was signed, the game theft started, and in 1993 and 1994 shots could be heard every night somewhere in the park.

The return to "normality" unleashed thousands of men, many of whom had never known any other way of replenishing their resources besides pointing at what they wanted with their AK-47s or R1-s. In addition, war refugees in the cities and towns had created a demand for meat that could not be met by the collapsed agricultural industry.

EVER TOUGHER MEASURES: Jack Greeff, who now works for a private reserve, helped to curtail poaching in the Kruger National Park by using what he calls "military methods"

In Africa, says Greeff, Mao's tenet that power flows from the barrel of a gun is the principle upon which authority in the countryside rests. The man with an AK-47 in his hand rules, no matter who or what he is. If he is a poacher, he controls the area, especially if the man who has to act against him, the ranger, is under-equipped or has had no training. "You aren't going to argue with an armed man. Unless you're stupid."

After acting as a conservation consultant for a number of years all over the continent, Greeff sees only three options:

- Task the national army with game protection, like in Botswana.
- Hire a private security company such as Executive Outcomes.
- Set up a rapid reaction force similar to the United Nations' peacekeepers.

Greeff favours the last option, and has submitted a proposal on it to the Game Rangers Association of Africa. Such a force would be clearly identifiable, would be neutral towards local forces and focus on military-style negotiations, and would be run internationally to avoid conflicts of interest.

Yet, he complains, African governmental bodies want nothing to do with his proposals for a military solution.

It is not difficult to see why. Although Greeff impresses one quickly with his know-how, he talks like a man from the old South Africa. As a former major in the old SADF's Special Forces, he carries a lot of baggage. And those African authorities who want to transform their countries into more humane societies have to keep all things military at a distance.

But it is when one narrows down the problem to the here-and-now one of saving animals from extinction that Greeff's criticisms and proposals are hard to counter. The traditional Western approach of combining animal protection with scientific work is no longer viable.

Often, to achieve objectives of political transformation, newly graduated female botany students are sent to run conservation in areas where rebels and bandits roam, to which Greeff shakes his head:

"The (rebel) is trained, he is aggressive, he is experienced, he has already killed a few people, and now you're sending a young student without any military briefing whatsoever to sort him out!

"Paramilitary training is out. The whole world wants to demilitarise. But when you send somebody somewhere to enforce the law, if you don't supply him with the same firepower and training as the poacher, it will simply not happen."

You might want to turn your back on Greeff when he scoffs at the "new world order" principle that humans are more important than animals. But when the poachers themselves don't make any distinction between human and animal meat, safeguarding animal rights might just lead to greater respect for human rights.

EnviroServ faces toxic waste probe

(56) BD 14/7/98

Josey Ballenger

THE SA Human Rights Commission planned to investigate charges that waste management company EnviroServ and two government departments violated environmental regulations in the Eastern Cape, the commission said yesterday.

Nalini Bagrath, a legal officer with the commission, said a full-scale investigation of EnviroServ and the water affairs and environmental affairs departments would be formally launched after the fact-finding phase.

The investigation would concern alleged "human rights violations" stemming from the company's toxic dump and medical waste incinerator at Aloes, an informal settlement outside Port Elizabeth.

The sites — which are situated less than 800m away from residents, in violation of regulations and international best practice — have allegedly caused health problems and deaths. Leakage from the landfill in water resources and air pollution from the incinerator have been blamed. The sites fall under the water affairs and environmental affairs departments.

Bagrath said residents and the Environmental Justice Networking Forum, a nongovernmental umbrella body, complained to the commission on the basis that a clean environment was guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

The commission informed the departments about the problem, but water affairs "didn't quite deal with the issues", and environmental affairs did not respond.

"We now feel there is a need for outside technical information" from independent experts, she said.

Bobby Peek, the forum's community campaigns co-ordinator, said the location of the sites next to a low-income, coloured and black area was "an example of environmental racism in this country". He said the community's tuberculosis rate was seven times higher than Port Elizabeth's, "allegedly because of the incinerator pollutants such as dioxins".

Commission chairman Barney Pityana said that after a public hearing — expected to be held in the first quarter of next year — the commission could recommend that legal action be taken. Pityana visited the community in May during the Speak Out on Poverty and Environment hearings.

Maruma and EnviroServ MD Ken Bromfield could not be reached for comment.

Illegal imports of banned CFCs on the rise

ST (BT) 5/7/98 (56)

REFRIGERATION

By DON ROBERTSON

THE illegal importation of the ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) is rising as the price of its replacement gases, hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) and hydrofluorocarbon (HFC), are set to rise between 30% and 40%.

Used as a gas in air conditioning units, refrigerators, aerosol cans and in the manufacture of rigid polystyrene foam, CFCs were banned in terms of an international agreement in Montreal. The refrigerants are also used on mines to lower underground temperatures.

SA imports about 4 000 tons of hydrofluorocarbon (known as R22 for its chemical combination) and about 650 tons of hydrochlorofluorocarbon (134a) worth about R90-million a year.

It is estimated that illegal imports have reached about 200 tons of CFC a year worth about R10-million. The CFCs originate in third world countries. Illegal importers pay less than R20/kg and resell the product for above R50/kg.

It costs about R2 000 to recharge a car air-conditioning unit using HFC or HCFCs, but only R400 using CFCs.

A CFC committee consisting of customs and excise officials and members of the industry has been set up to monitor illegal imports and fines or jail terms will be imposed on those found guilty of importing, purchasing or trading in illegal CFCs.

In terms of the Montreal Protocol, world CFC production plants were closed in 1995 — SA's only plant was in Sasolburg. Only CFCs stockpiled before the plants closed could be used.

New HCFC and HFC plants were then established at a cost of billions of rands, largely in America and Europe.

According to a spokesman for Fluorochemicals Europe, prices for fluorocarbon alternatives will have to rise substantially before the huge investments are recovered.

"Investments by producers to ensure the rapid phase-out of CFCs led to an oversupply situation (of alternatives) for several years as the market reacted more slowly than anticipated to eliminate the use of CFCs," he says.

"The widespread availability of illegally imported CFC products in Europe, and the inability of the EU and national governments to cope with this, further slowed down the increase in prices."

According to a recent industry report, attempts to raise HFC 134a prices last year failed because there was a HFC surplus capacity and the continued supply of CFCs from legal and illegal sources undermined sales.

World demand for HFCs is increasing by about 15% a year and is expected to reach 98 000 tons this year compared with production of about 110 000 tons. In addition, stockpiles of CFCs are diminishing and some distributors have actually run out for the first time since the Montreal Protocol.

As a result, Du Pont Europe announced a 10%-15% increase in the price of HFCs in May and it is expected that the price of HCFCs will increase 30% to 40% soon.

HCFCs also deplete the ozone layer to some extent, but will be in use until 2020.

Locally, it is expected that the price of HFC 134a will increase from current levels of about R43.75/kg, while HCFC R22 will rise from R16.25/kg.

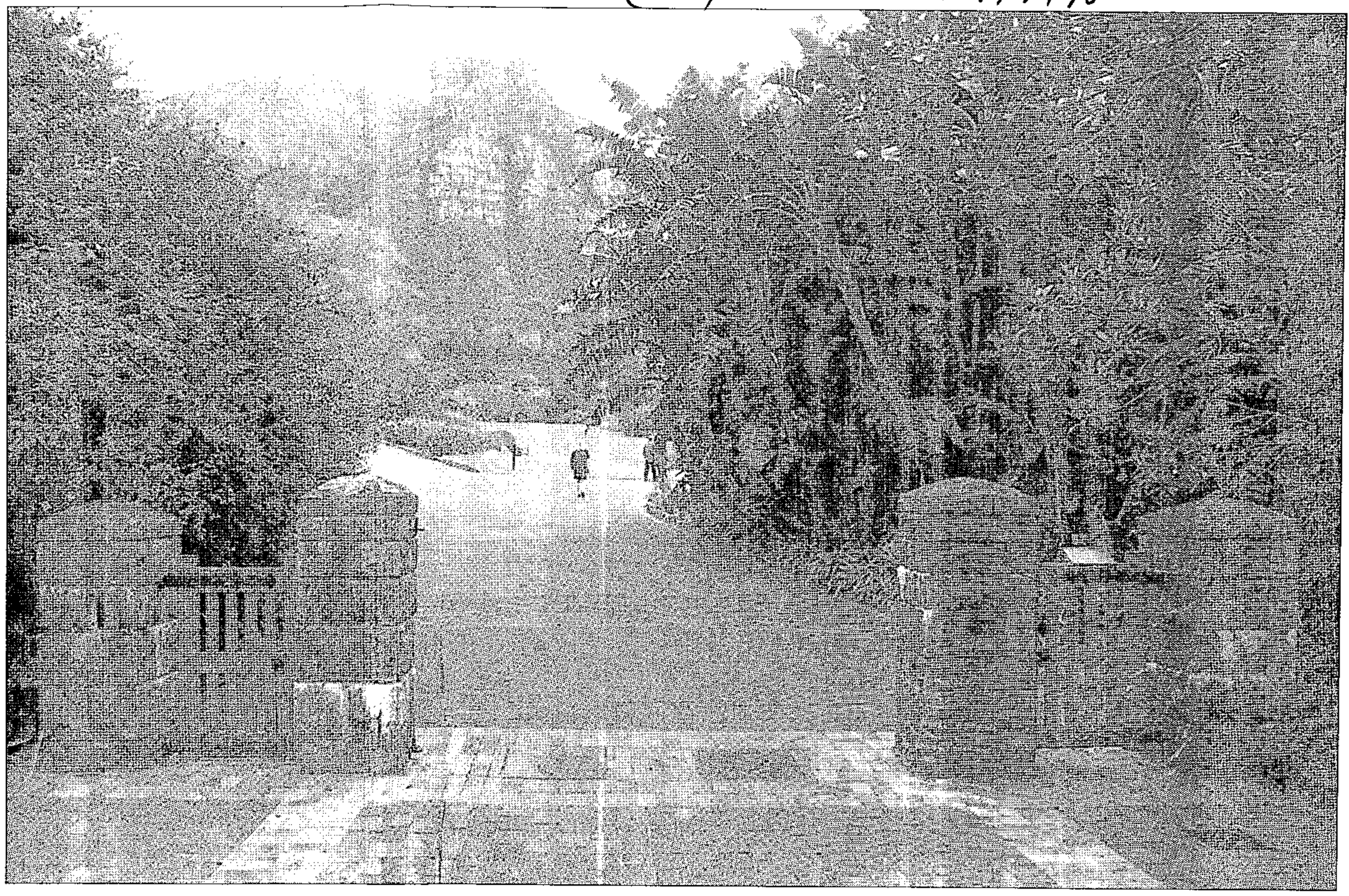
This is how our garden will grow

Kirstenbosch puts case for changes that set off fierce debate

(56) ARG 7/7/98

INSIDE STORY

Far from 'paving over paradise', writes **Professor B J Huntley,** new developments will help the National Botanical Institute enhance its role as custodian of the world's richest flora and promote conservation



Nature and nurture: amid development, management and maintenance of Kirstenbosch will remain in harmony with the unique environment, says the National Botanical Institute

demands male on the shop for such objects.

The devdopment of the new restaurant hs become an urgent priority due to tne increased number of local and overseas visitors, complaints regarding the absence of toilets in the existing restaurant, the long distance to walk down a steep slope, especially on rainy days, the absence of easy wheelchair access and the limited range of items on the menu.

More important, the income-generating capacity of the old restaurant is limited by its size, its kitchen facilities and its position in the middle of the garden.

Contrary to the views expressed in the press, the new restaurant will be tastefully designed to fit unobtrusively into the landscape and will offer magnificent views of the garden and mountain which the current restaurant does not enjoy.

Easier access, better kitchen facilities, adequate toilets and wheelchair access, and an interesting menu with more choice of typical Cape dishes will be offered.

The restaurant will comprise both a self-service cafeteria section and an a la carte section with table service.

Both sections will offer a wide range of foods and beverages at affordable prices, with a choice of more sophisticated options for business breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

The present restaurant will be closed when the new restaurant comes into operation.

The present prefabricated building will be removed and the site landscaped to blend in with the surrounding area (inclusive of Sanlam lecture hall, Botanical Society garden centre, Botanical Society offices, demonstration gardens, etc) as the "horticultural information hub" of the garden.

The site presently occupied by the existing restaurant will be prepared for use for flower shows, gardening equipment exhibitions, and other income-generating activities, such as large functions under temporary marquee cover.

The redevelopment of the site will include provision for a small "tea and scones" outlet, for those wishing to relax in this section of the garden, serving the demand of many of our local visitors who want a quiet, informal and very inexpensive outing.

In order to better inform the interested public of the "before and after" views of the Kirstenbosch Development Campaign, a photographic display is on show in the new visitors' centre.

Plans of the new restaurant, once completed by the architects, will also be placed on display.

In a vibrant, free society, comment and criticism is a healthy measure of public interest and commitment.

Much of the negative comment published in the media over the past few weeks is based on limited information, which I hope these notes will help clarify.

We welcome further comment and debate regarding developments at Kirstenbosch, which is, after all, a garden for the nation.

■ *Professor Huntley is chief executive officer of the National Botanical Institute*

Recent letters to the press have voiced both delight and dismay at developments in Kirstenbosch.

The interest and concern displayed by the public are a source of encouragement to the staff of this world-renowned garden, and it is appropriate that an outline of the development programme be provided to inform those who have not been able to attend the various public briefings presented over the past several years.

The National Botanical Institute is acutely aware of its role, as a custodian of the world's richest flora, to ensure that it contributes effectively to promoting the conservation and enjoyment of our indigenous plant life for all people.

It can only achieve its goals if it responds actively to the challenges and demands of a changing society.

Towards this end, the Kirstenbosch Development Campaign was launched in 1991, and has been widely publicised in the media and through large posters at the two entrances to the garden.

The overwhelming majority of visitors to Kirstenbosch have been incredibly supportive of the recent developments and activities.

The Summer Sunset Concert series, the Zimbabwe stone sculptures, bonsai shows and Botanical Society conservatory have received wide acclaim.

Improvements to the environmental education centre, garden administration facilities and the new Kirstenbosch research centre have given a great impetus to our activities in these fields.

The new visitors' centre, including the new Kirstenbosch shop, the Old Mutual conference and exhibition centre, and the Caffe Botanica, plus the soon-to-be-developed restaurant, will provide the South African public with the level of service that a world-class botanical garden should offer.

'Much of the negative comment in the media over the past few weeks is based on limited information'

As a service organisation, heavily subsidised by government, it is the National Botanical Institute's responsibility to ensure that the management and maintenance of Kirstenbosch is efficient and in harmony with the unique environment of the site.

Developments at Kirstenbosch have been based on the detailed consultants' reports submitted by eminent architects (Fagan, Botha, Mulder) and synthesised by the NBI landscape architect in the early 1990s.

The consultants all recommended that new developments be sited as close to the lower boundary of the garden as possible, leaving the centre of the garden and its upper reaches free from large buildings.

Thus the overall development plan made use of a broad base of expert professional opinion.

In choosing architects for individual projects, the advice of the Cape Institute of Architects was followed.

The appointment of the architect for the new visitors' centre was based on the recommendations of an adjudication panel on submissions made in an open competition.

In a similar process, the award of the lease for the new shop was based on the adjudication of more than a dozen proposals made in response to a call for tenders published in the media.

The same is true of the selection, by public proposal call, of submissions for the operation of the proposed new restaurant.

The perception of some critics of current developments, that these have been undertaken without wide consultation, is simply inaccurate. The comment, in a letter to the press, that Kirstenbosch is being "covered in paving", is wildly exaggerated.

The new visitors' centre stands on a site previously occupied by old wood and iron workshops, storerooms, service yards and prefabricated office buildings.

The whole area lies outside the main garden, on land previously excluded from public access.

It has been transformed into urgently needed parking and visitors' facilities (information kiosk, coffee bar, shop, conference centre, art gallery, toilets, etc), plus the Botanical Society conservatory, where the public can now see the many hundreds of species of rare succulents, bulbs, ferns, etc that were previously kept "behind the garden wall".

Visitors will notice that we now have three shopping outlets in the garden.

The Botanical Society still operates the book shop (in the new venue) and the garden shop (selling plants and gardening equipment) from the old venue.

This area is to be developed as the "horticultural hub" of the garden, where demonstration gardens, lectures and flower shows (in the Sanlam Hall) will provide a greatly improved service to keen gardeners.

The new Kirstenbosch shop, situated in the new visitors' centre, is building up a wide range of natural products and souvenirs.

The majority of the merchandise is locally produced.

A new range of merchandise, the "Kirstenbosch Collection", is being developed to give clearer identity to products portraying the garden's ethos.

The NBI is reluctant to approve the sale of cheap, tasteless and poor-quality tourist souvenirs despite the

THRASHING OUT THE ISSUE

Meeting to debate shark cage-diving

(56) CT 7/7/98

SHARK CAGE-DIVING is, like abortion, a black-and-white issue for many people. Still a fairly small, unregulated industry in South Africa, it is growing rapidly — and so is the debate. **WILLEM STEENKAMP** reports.

THE Department of Sea Fisheries will next week host a "consultative" meeting on shark cage-diving, to investigate the viability of allowing shark cage-diving in False Bay and elsewhere — and to introduce regulations and a permit system for this burgeoning industry.

The most popular spot for shark cage-diving at present is the channel between Dyer and Geyser islands off Gansbaai, but there is mounting interest in other known shark-infested areas, particularly Seal Island in False Bay.

However, as more and more people want to start up cage-diving businesses, there is also a growing number of those who believe such operations will cause a sharp rise in shark attacks on humans.

But cage-diving operator Chris Fallows who, with partner Robert Lawrence, has already been quietly taking divers to Seal Island for more than three years, said the lack of attacks in False Bay in that time was proof that cage-diving did not create additional risks.

At the heart of the issue is the diving operators' practice of "chumming" — throwing fish mixed with seawater into the sea — or using bait to attract sharks.

The operators say chumming is harmless, that there are few attacks despite it being practised universally by fishermen, but detractors are adamant that chumming serves only to "condition" sharks to associate humans with food.

Sea Fisheries spokesperson Themba Ngada confirmed yesterday that a meeting of "all stakeholders" was planned for Wednesday next week to thrash out the issue. Plans are afoot to introduce a permit system and allow controlled cage-diving in False Bay "and elsewhere", Ngada said.

Kalk Bay harbour-master and Sea Fisheries' chief inspector for False Bay Pat Stacey, who is to attend the meeting, said a stringent 50-point cage-diving permit system would be tabled, aimed at regulating all aspects such as defining required conditions on boats or stipulating that a divemaster be on board during a dive.

Stacey said he would not have a problem with the activity in False Bay, as long as "they limit the permit system" and conditions were stringently enforced.

Both Fallows and catamaran charter operator Philippe Parmengier, who plans to start up a cage-diving business in False Bay, want the same. They were in favour of tight controls to "root out" inexperienced and fly-by-night operators.

Fallows said he had been involved in talks with Sea Fisheries for over two years about regulating the industry, but that nothing had been finalised yet. "I just wish the whole system would hurry along."

Parmengier, who is still conducting research on the viability of an operation in False Bay, said he would be targeting tourists and a "professional" approach was therefore imperative. "(South Africa) is one of the best places in the world, with Australia, to see these animals," he said.

Fallows, who has for the past eight years been tagging sharks in False Bay for the Oceanographic Research Institute and Sea Fisheries, and has extensive experience of the fish, said although he was investigating alternative methods to chumming, it was the only way to draw sharks to his boat. Fishermen threw much more chum and fish waste into the sea, even close inshore, than diving operators "and it doesn't increase attacks".

He scotched the argument that sharks would eventually associate humans with food. "If anything, they will probably associate chumming and bait with the boat."

Also, great white sharks rarely stayed in the same area for very long and would therefore not become conditioned to being fed by humans.

Not so, said John Munnik of the recently formed group Save Our Swimmers and Sharks (SOSS).

He postulated that great whites had good memories and because they swam long distances they could strike at locations far away because they associated humans with food.

Many other animals could be conditioned, he said, and there was no reason to think that sharks could not be.

Also, he said, chum was often prepared by people using their bare hands — which left a human scent on the mixture.

SOSS was opposed to cage-diving permits being issued until further studies were done on sharks, Munnik said. "Before any more people get eaten, we want more research done," he said.

Alex Papayanni, education officer for the divers' body Diving Africa, said he felt cage-diving had "massive" tourist potential but that it had to be strictly controlled.

"I'm not against it personally and I don't think my union would be against it — but no chumming. (Shark cage-diving) must be done naturally," Papayanni said.

Chum could drift for kilometres and was "too dangerous" to be allowed. "Sooner or later somebody's going to get bitten."

● See Page 15

MAVERICK SON SPEAKS HIS MIND

Globalise conservation — Leakey

(56) CT 8/7/98

RICHARD LEAKEY, controversial conservationist, outspoken politician and Africa's maverick son, was in Cape Town this week talking to business people, conservationists and human rights activists. **DONALD PAUL** reports.

WHEN Richard Leakey last addressed a gathering of business leaders in Cape Town in 1994, a few people stormed out of the luncheon over remarks he made regarding Cuba. On Monday, not one of the 600 delegates left the room, displaying either a heightened sensibility on their part or an increasingly large pragmatic business streak.

As Robbie Robertson, an old colleague of Leakey's and former South African parks board chairperson, said afterwards: "You must be getting old, Richard — you didn't piss anyone off."

Leakey laughed, but thinks Robertson is being unfair. "I speak my mind, but I think once you get into politics and have been speaking your mind as long as I have, you realise there are ways of saying the same thing that don't antagonise people."

So, has Leakey, Africa's maverick son, finally become a grown up — and an old one at that?

Judging by his current interests, I'd say it's not bloody likely. He is in South Africa, he says, because he likes "to see what's going on, see a few people and say a few things". Yes, but what is he saying, I want to know, and who is he seeing?

"I gave two talks on Monday. One at the Baxter to a group of businessmen about technology and markets in Africa. It was the keynote address. I gave a fairly broad picture, but I told them that if they want to survive, now, in black Africa, they must be prepared to look beyond the short-term profit.

"Then I went on and spoke at UCT, where I discussed conservation. Again, really focusing on the big picture and moving away from the prevailing philosophy which is species specific. And the very real conflict between economic need and the shortage of public funds. There probably is the will to implement conservation programmes but there isn't much money. Most of the money that does come in is private money and that is usually rather patronising."

Leakey feels that conservation efforts should move beyond regional and species specific issues and become a global concern. "We should tackle conservation in the same way as we did the eradication of smallpox. If the issue is seen as a global one, then you take out the political and regional haggling which hinders so many efforts today."

Asked about Campfire — Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources — launched in Zimbabwe in 1986, Leakey is quick to point out that such programmes should not be considered blueprints for conservation efforts elsewhere.

"There is no single solution. It may have worked in certain parts of Zimbabwe but when I visited the offices in Zimbabwe, it was clear that it still existed on handouts. I mean meat was being given to Campfire communities in order that a big game hunter could come and shoot a trophy," he said. "It's not really working."

Leakey has now entered the political world full-time. In 1995 he announced his plans to challenge Daniel arap Moi's ruling Kenya African National Union party in the 1997 elections. His opposition party, Safina (the Swahili word for Noah's Ark), he said, was based on the desire to eliminate corruption and lawlessness in the country. (His brother Phillip was for a long time the only elected white MP in Kenya's parliament.)

Kanu officials immediately launched a smear campaign against Leakey, calling him a racist and accusing him of being in cahoots with disreputable foreign businessmen. At one point he was physically attacked by a gang of Kanu party youths when he tried to visit a jailed dissident, Koigi wa Wamwere.

Safina won five seats in the elections at the beginning of this year.

While Leakey was in Cape Town he met Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Leakey and his colleagues have tabled a motion in the Kenyan parliament for the establishment of a "truth and reconciliation-style forum" which, he believes, is necessary to tackle the legacy of bribery, corruption and patronage that has so dominated Kenyan public life.

Yesterday at the South African Museum he gave a public lecture on behalf of Amnesty International in which he dealt with the issues of human rights. Leakey told a story of how a man accused of stealing cattle was tortured and beaten by the police in an attempt to elicit a confession.

When that failed, they stripped and beat the man's pregnant wife. Leakey took the matter up in parliament but to no avail. In discussing it, he said he was astonished that there was "no sense of outrage" about the travesty. Leakey feels that the "fundamental challenge facing Kenyans was the need to understand that torture and brutality were not acceptable".

CONSERVATIONIST: Richard Leakey at the height of his conservation campaign in Kenya, before he went into opposition politics. *FILE PICTURE*

SA vulnerable to chemical disaster on roads

CT 9/7/98 (56)

MELANIE-ANN FERIS

MARITZBURG: Thousands of litres of highly flammable acetone ignited into a ball of flame when a tanker carrying the chemical hit a stationary vehicle on the N3 in Ashburton here early yesterday.

The accident occurred shortly after 4am, but rescue workers were still struggling to contain the blaze and clear the area by midday yesterday.

Ricky Pillay of the Midlands Fire Rescue Service said about 6 000 litres of acetone had ignited, but that they had managed to stop the fire from spreading to another tanker containing about 40 000 litres of acetone.

Another tanker loaded with thousands of litres of paraffin also overturned near Port Shepstone yesterday morning.

Although there was no spillage reported, the paraffin had to be decanted as the tankers had been damaged.

These are just two of the hundreds of accidents involving vehicles transporting hazardous chemicals which are occurring on South Africa's roads on an almost daily basis.

Over the past few weeks, motorists had to deal with an asbestos spill on the N3, a wax spill on the M1 south, and 36 drums of hydrochloric acid, nitric acid, sulphuric acid and ethalene which fell off the back of a truck travelling on the Modderriver road in the Northern Cape.

Codes of standards set up by the SABS are blatantly ignored, environmental groups warn

New legislation in the form of the National Road Traffic Act, which is expected to regulate and control the transport of hazardous substances on the country's roads, is only expected to be passed by Parliament at the end of the year.

Millions of litres of chemicals such as poisons, radioactive waste and explosive materials are transported around the country daily, leaving South Africa vulnerable to a major chemical disaster.

Existing laws only set standards for the transport of chemicals by tankers and existing codes of standards set up by the South African Bureau of Standards are blatantly ignored, environmental organisations have warned.

According to Deidre Briesche, deputy director of administration for the Department of Transport: "We are working hard to solve the problems on the roads. We do not have enough staff, for example we have only one person who does the drafting of road traffic regulations."

The process to establish uniform legislation started two years ago and has involved broad consultation in the chemical industry, says John Schnell, director of the Kwazulu-Natal Road Traffic Inspectorate.

According to Schnell, legislation on hazardous goods transportation and storage has for years been split up among different departments, including the Department of Health, the police and fire departments.

Despite the introduction of new legislation to control and monitor the hazardous substances transport industry, Schnell believes that accidents will continue on the country's roads.

"More and more chemicals are being transported by road. We would rather see certain substances being moved by rail," Schnell said.

Discussions with the road and rail industries on such a possibility were ongoing, he said.

'Green' Bill up for debate

M+G 10-16/7/98 (56)

Fiona Macleod

"Sustainable development" of natural and cultural resources for the benefit of current and future generations is the main thrust of the draft National Environmental Management Bill, now up for public debate.

Individuals and organisations have until July 29 to submit comment on the Bill, which the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism is determined to push through during this parliamentary session. Public hearings are likely to be held in September, say its drafters.

The Bill defines "sustainable development" as development which "does not reduce the availability of renewable resources to future generations; and minimises the rate of depletion of a non-renewable resource".

Another key principle is that public participation in decision-making about the environment should be promoted. The department will act as "lead agent" in protecting the environment, but it must perform this role in balance with "the principle of co-operative governance".

The Bill states all national departments and provincial governments have been consulted, as well as the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the Chemical and Allied Industries Association and the South African National Civics Organisation.

Foremost among the bodies the legislation aims to set up are a national environmental forum, a commission on sustainable development and a committee for environmental co-ordination.

The forum will comprise "a well-balanced mixture of representatives which shall inform the minister of the views of interested and affected parties".

The committee's chief role will be to co-ordinate the environmental functions of government and provincial departments. The commission will assist in reporting to the international community on the state of the environment.

Inquiries about submissions to Judy Beaumont at (021) 402-3029, or Pierre Retief at (012) 310-2531

Bill for unified management of forests tabled

Linda Ensor

GOVERNMENT has proposed mechanisms to promote the sustainable management of private and state forests in conjunction with the private sector.

The National Forestry Bill tabled in Parliament yesterday aimed to unify the current fragmented system governing the regulation and promotion of the forestry sector, water affairs and forestry chief director Lael Bethlehem said.

For the first time, too, proposals have been made for the sustainable management of commercial and indigenous forests. Criteria and indicators for achieving this would be formulated by a special committee representing government, industry and other stakeholders.

In terms of the bill the national forests advisory council would be legally constituted.

BD 15/7/98

SA firm won't be importing New York garbage

(56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Star 15/7/98

Waste-management company EnviroServ said yesterday it was not planning to import and dispose of hundreds of tons of domestic waste from New York.

The company has come under attack from environmental groups – including the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF), Greenpeace and the Basel Action Network – which indicated that EnviroServ was planning to import 12 000 tons of New York's waste every day for burning in Namibia.

EnviroServ's chief executive officer Alistair McLean admitted yesterday that the company had last year tendered to handle domestic waste from New York "should there be interest in the establishment of waste-to-energy plants in Africa".

On this basis, the company approached the Walvis Bay municipality, which expressed interest in developing a waste-to-energy plant to fuel its future electric needs.

"EnviroServ has been involved in establishing the feasibility of such a project; however we have recently been made aware that the Namibian government is opposed to the importation of waste for a waste-to-energy plant.

"EnviroServ is no longer considering this project in Namibia, and is no longer involved in the tender to handle New York waste," McLean said.

EnviroServ was recently commissioned to do a six-month cleanup of hundreds of tons of chemicals and pesticides from storage sites in Mozambique – a project regarded as the biggest of its kind in Africa.

The project, being overseen by the Mozambican government, has been sponsored by the Danish Government Development Agency, Danida. EnviroServ will transport the chemicals, which will be disposed of by a third party, McLean said.

This project has also come under attack from environmental groups, which believe the incineration of waste in cement kilns is known to create dangerous, cancer-causing compounds.

EJNF spokesman Bobby Peek said this week: "While probably well intended, the Danida pesticide waste-disposal plan appears to have been biased from the start in favour of one of the worst disposal options – burning – in Mozambique.

"In our view, Mozambique is being asked to suffer twice. First they have been given very dangerous pesticides, and now they are being given a dangerous technology to deal with them."

Tender calls for recycling 12 000 tons every day

DRAFT PLANS RELEASED

Peninsula Park aims to be self-sufficient

(56) CT 15/7/98

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS for the Cape Peninsula National Park aim to balance self-sufficiency with managing the increase in tourists. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

FLOATING "airships", electric buses, restaurants, lodges, conference centres and new cableways — these are some of the draft development proposals for the Cape Peninsula National Park.

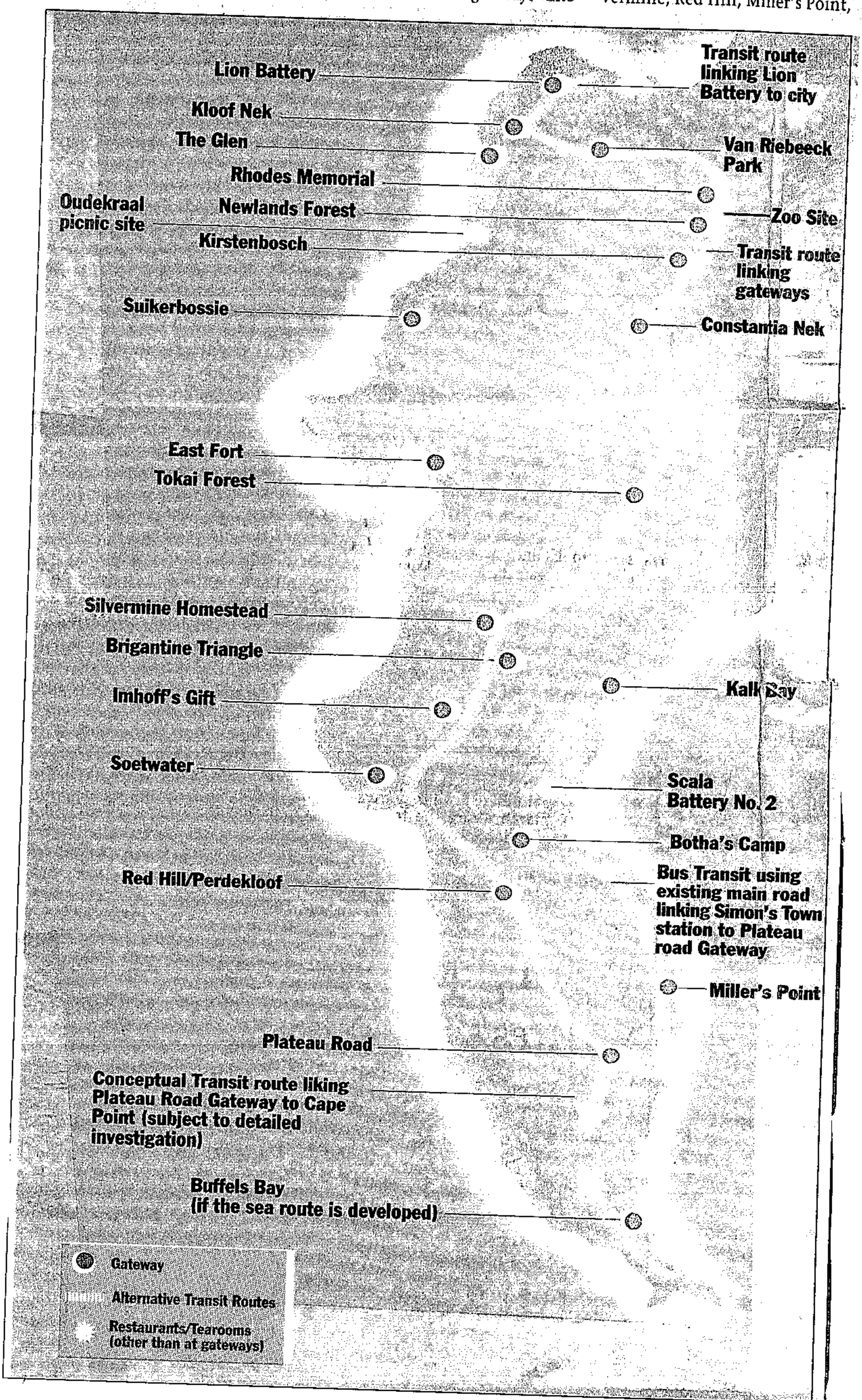
The bold development framework is aimed at making the country's newest national park financially self-sufficient, while managing the Peninsula's burgeoning foreign tourist market, predicted to attract 9,3 million visitors a year by 2010.

Unless managed properly, say SA National Parks, recreational use of the park will clash with conservation.

The draft development document proposes a set of 15 "gateways" into the park dotted around the Peninsula, close to roads or public transport, which will be designed to cope with large numbers of people without damaging the environment.

The gateways will vary from those which offer only parking and three circular walking routes to others with restaurants, flea markets, education centres, picnic areas and lodges for accommodation.

Some of the suggested gateway sites are Kloof Nek, Kirstenbosch, Silvermine, Red Hill, Miller's Point,



Plateau Road and Suikerbossie.

Apart from those at gateways, restaurants are also proposed on top of Ou Kaapseweg, at Scala Battery above Simon's Town, at Smitswinkel Bay Forest Station, on the old zoo site near UCT and at the Oudekraal picnic site.

The gateways will be linked by a public transit route running from Signal Hill to Cape Point. It will consist of existing roads inside and outside the park and funiculars or cableways. At some places short sections of road will have to be built, and to avoid traffic congestion, electric buses or compressed air vehicles are proposed.

No new entry fees will be introduced, except by public consent.

Other proposed access routes are:

- A cableway or "ski-lift" up Kasteelspoort from Camps Bay to the Back Table, where the remains of an old cableway used in the construction the mountain top dams still exist.
- A cableway or "ski-lift" from Kirstenbosch to Rooikat Buttress, which will allow visitors to be ferried up one side of the mountain, walk across the top past the dams and descend down the cableway at Kasteelspoort to Camps Bay.
- A funicular from Constantia Nek to the top of the Back Table.
- Converting the navy's ammunition cableway, which links Simon's Town and the Naval Base Signal School, to carry visitors.

Environment education centres may have overnight accommodation, and double as conference centres.

The document says there is a demand for "bosberaad" facilities in the Western Cape and proposes large-scale conference facilities in the park and smaller ones for "break-away" sessions.

There are also proposals for camping and caravaning, but no sites have been identified yet.

The framework proposes a system of trails and day hikes in the park, which will be linked to allow visitors to hike from Signal Hill to Cape Point, overnighting on the way.

Specialist historical or cultural trails are also proposed, focusing on kramats (shrines) and military history. The document says the park provides huge opportunities for "adventure tourism", but these should be restricted to certain areas and be guided by a code of conduct. They include:

- Hang-gliding and paragliding, where clubs should be responsible for the costs of infrastructure such as launching and parking areas.
- Rock climbing where numbers should be controlled and tariffs set.
- Diving, where National Parks may establish commercial ventures.
- Boat trips, with possible docking at Buffels Bay in Cape Point reserve.
- Floating airships as a silent alternative to helicopters.

All development proposals will be subjected to environmental impact assessments, which include public participation.

National Parks head Mavuso Msimang said his cash-strapped organisation cannot afford a "romantic view" of conservation, and that parks must be used sustainably, particularly through tourism, to make money to pay for conservation.

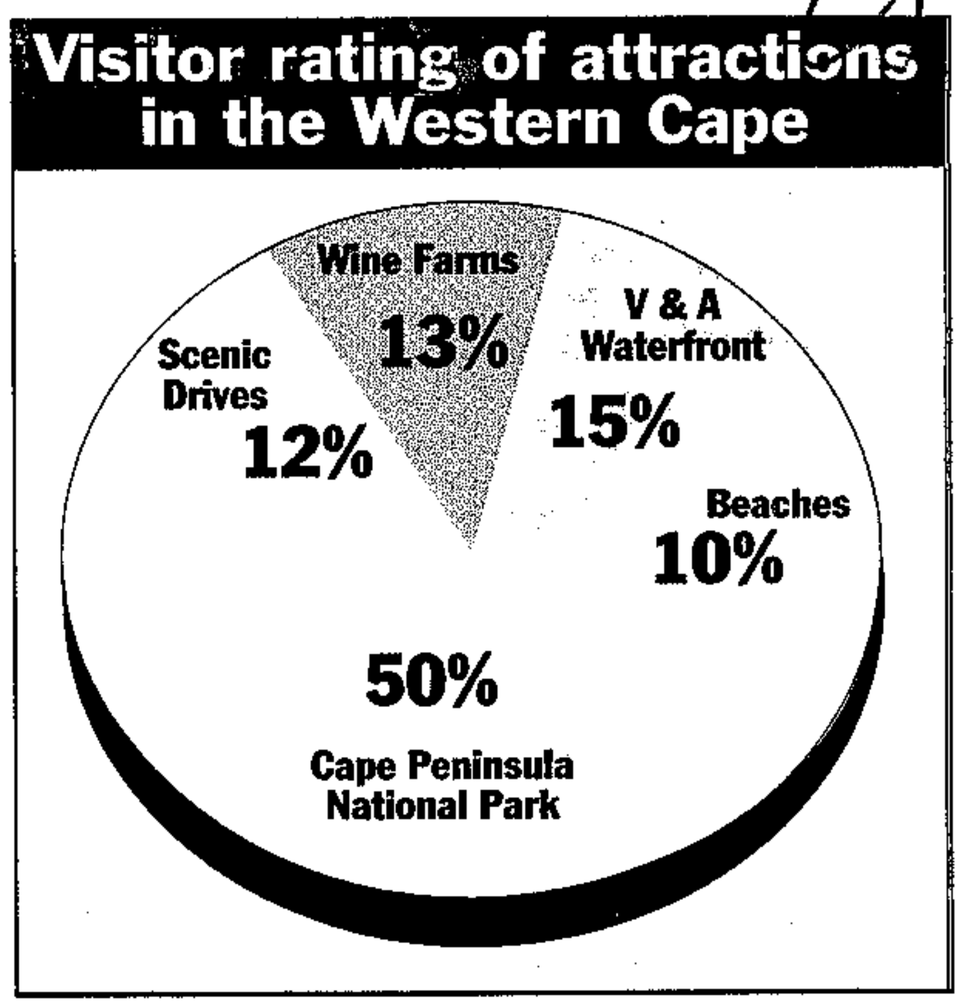
The draft development document says although the park aims to become self-sufficient, it must be done without compromising core conservation objectives.

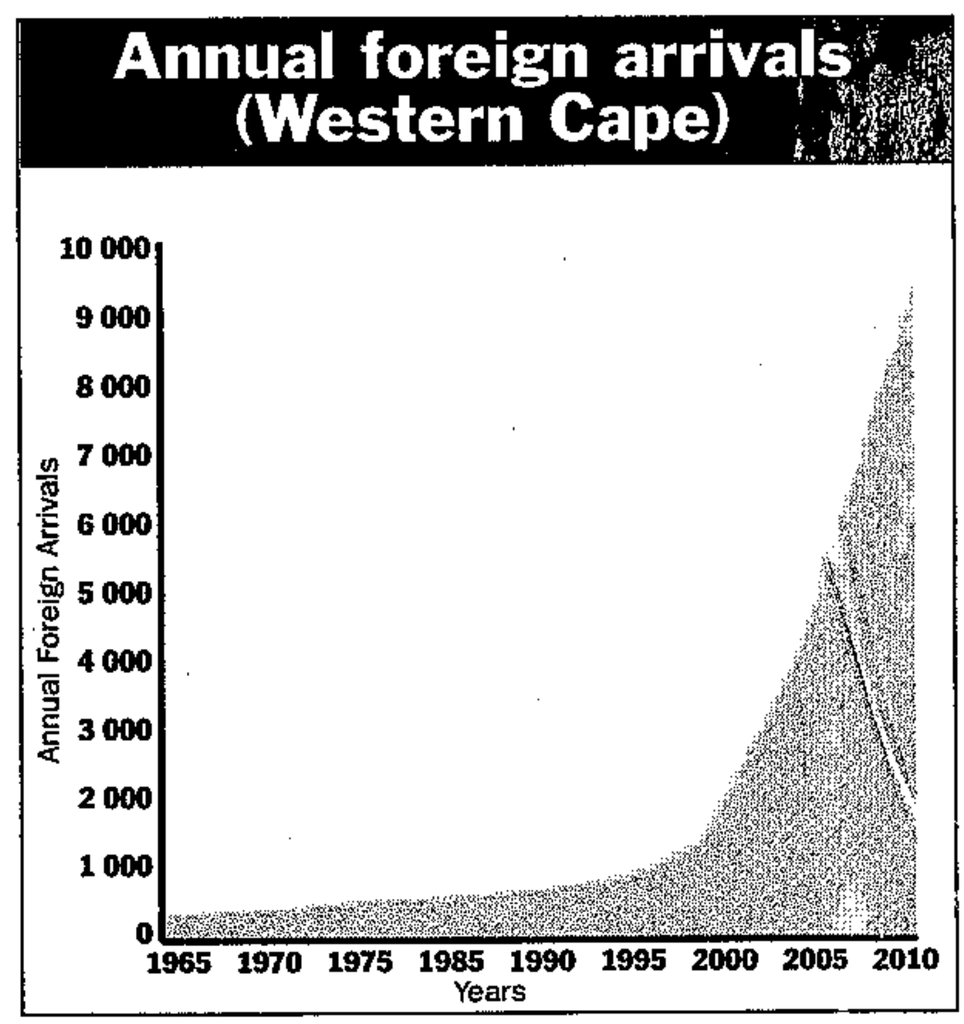
J H Gilomee, president of the Habitat Council, said his organisation did not believe this was possible.

"We are convinced that for sufficient funds to be generated to run the park, development of such proportions would have to take place that the integrity of the new national park would be severely violated," he said.

Ms Alida Croudace of the Redhill Conservation Group has said the gateways proposed for Plateau Road and Perdekloof in the southern Peninsula are both "highly unsuitable", as they fall right inside the park, not on the perimeter.

- National Parks has asked the public to comment on the development proposals before Friday, July 31, by fax at (021) 762-9616, or email: leannev@parks-sa.co.za or write to PO Box 44562, Claremont, 7735.





Huge growth in visitors expected

- **The number of annual foreign visitors to the Western Cape is expected to rise from just under one million today to 9,3m in 2010.**
- **Altogether seven of the 10 places most often visited in South Africa are in the Western Cape.**
- **Three of these are in the Cape Peninsula — Table Mountain Cableway, Kirstenbosch and Cape Point.**
- **Fifty percent of the destinations which foreign visitors consider the most essential part of their visit are found within the boundaries of the Cape Peninsula National Park.**
- **There has been an international swing away from package tours and hotel accommodation to individual tours and more "intimate" accommodation.**
- **The backpacking tourist industry, with young tourists, is growing rapidly.**

Salt gives new lease of life to Wildevoëlvlei

ENVIRONMENT WRITER (56)

A HEAVY dose of salt has saved Wildevoëlvlei. CT 16/7/98

The vlei, part of the Noordhoek wetlands, became toxic earlier this year after some unidentified substance, which possibly entered the vlei through the stormwater system, killed off all the aquatic plant life.

This allowed the toxic blue-green algae to flourish, poisoning the vlei.

Bill Harding, of the Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC), then conceived a bold plan to dose the vlei with salt in the belief that the problem algae would not tolerate saline conditions.

A helicopter was called in and spent the better part of a day dumping tons of salt into the vlei.

The latest test shows the problem algae has now been eradicated and that the mussel beds at the mouth of the vlei are no longer toxic.

The way in which the problem was tackled has attracted international scientific interest and Harding will present a paper on it at the International Society for Limnology in Dublin next month.

But the success may be temporary only, and CMC experts say the challenge now is to find ways of protecting river systems from the harmful effects of urbanisation.

They have commissioned a study of the catchment area of the Noordhoek wetlands which will form the basis of the long-term management and protection of the rivers in the area.

Observatory

Future of hospital site in your hands

ARG 16/7/98 (56)

Park plan proves popular

JENNY VIALL
HEALTH REPORTER

It's the place where two rivers meet with a wetland rich in bird life, wide open spaces and a magnificent view of Devil's Peak.

It's home to one of the few urban farms in the city and a haven for the mentally ill and disabled. It's rich in history, is environmentally important as a "green lung" for the city and has remained largely undeveloped since the first settlers began farming the land in the 17th Century.

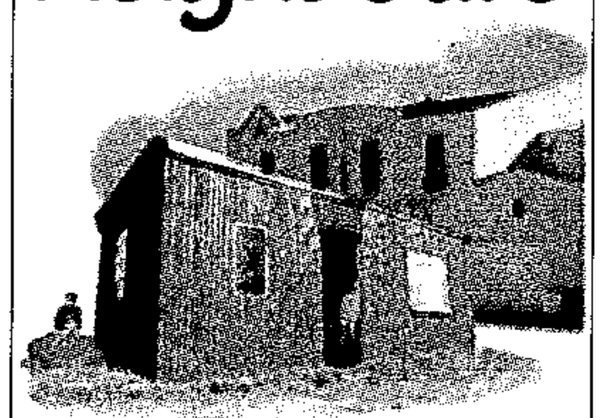
Now the people of Cape Town must decide what its future will be.

Most know the area as Valkenberg, but it is much bigger than just the hospital. The City of Cape Town, which has begun a public process to determine future use, is calling it the Black River Regional Park.

It's an enormous tract of land, about 250ha in extent, and most of it is public land, either state or council-owned. Transnet owns a large portion on which the River Club is situated, the University of Cape Town has just sold most of its holding to developers LTA Construction, a small portion was swopped with the Chinese Association for its Mowbray building and part is owned by Nashua and by the Vincent Palotti Hospital.

For years the land has been the centre of environmental studies, council reports and policy plans. There's a wealth of information on the area, but no clear plan for it.

Neighbours



Send your neighbourhood news and notices to Peter Goosen at 488 4311, fax 488 4075 or e-mail nhood@ctn.independent.co.za

There are also a lot of people with an interest in the land, from developers who would like to see office parks, to those who would prefer there to be no further building.

Most of the land is zoned for community facilities, or public open space. His People Christian Missionaries would like to build a centre there and UCT has come up with a plan for a private teaching hospital.

A working farm village where mentally ill and disabled people can live and work has also been suggested.

Now that Valkenberg's future as a smaller psychiatric hospital has been decided, state land has come under the control of the province's Department of Asset Management.

While it seems that the city would like the land to be a park, what form that park takes and how to finance it have to be decided. It's valuable land, close to the city. It's also home to one of the city's few remaining nature reserve, the Raapenberg Bird Sanctuary. The Vincent Palotti wetlands are there, and more than 100 different species of birds, 60% of them terrestrial, nest there.

It's rich in history: Zulu king Cetshwayo was imprisoned on the Oude Molen farm, where the first brick mill was completed in 1718, and there are four national monuments in the area, one of which is the original Valkenberg Manor House.

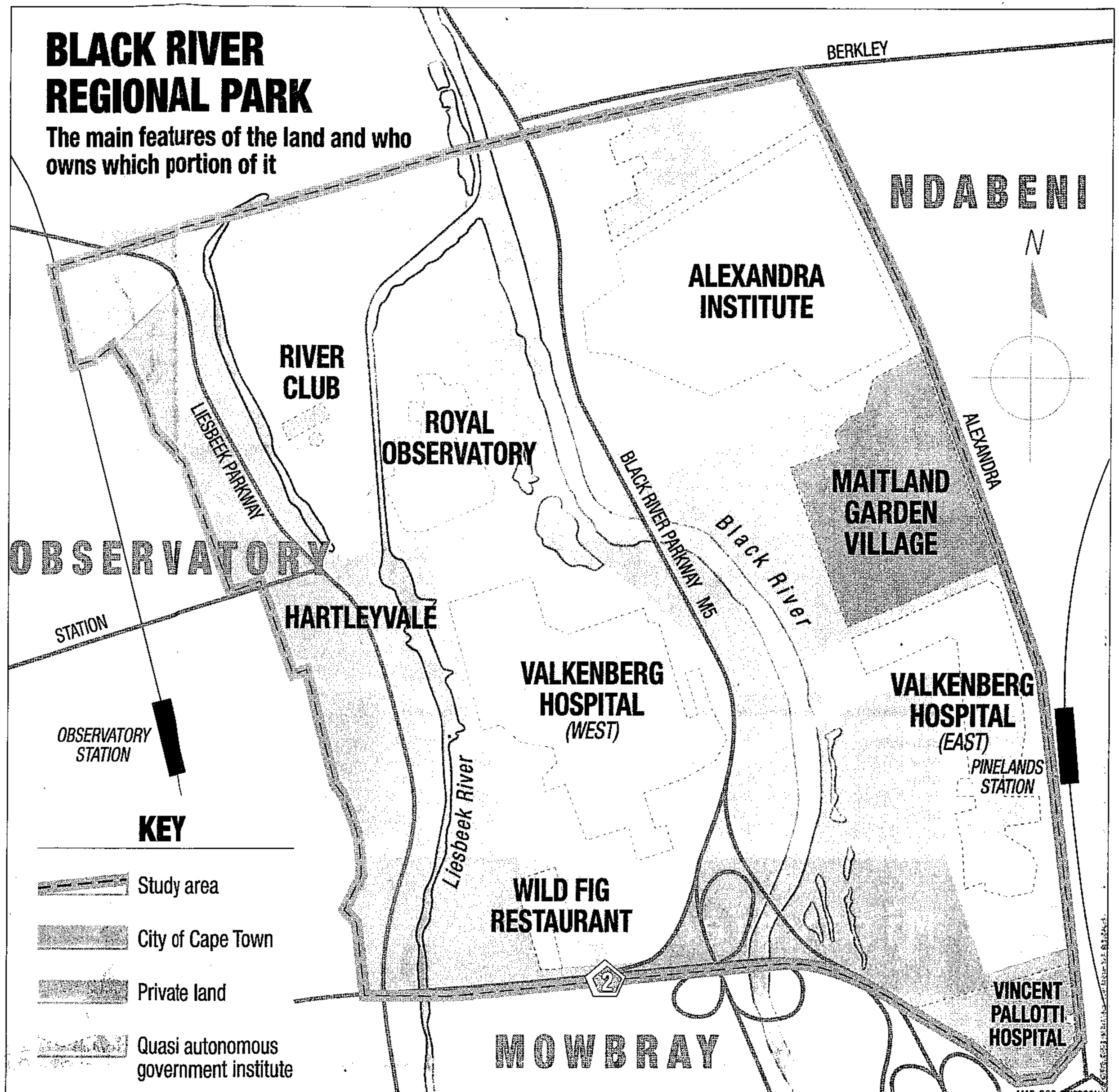
Cape Town has no large outdoor recreational area and needs open areas as suburbs get more built up. The Valkenberg Confluence Alliance would like to see a therapeutic centre for the people of Cape Town, and an open place for people to jog and walk.

The challenge is to come up with a plan that takes into account conflicting interests, and the City of Cape Town has now begun a public participation process to determine what should be done with the land.

Desiree Shepherd, who is co-ordinating the process, has asked any organisation or individual with particular knowledge of the site to register with her as a stakeholder.

She can be telephoned at 400 2399, or faxed at 419 8536, or e-mailed at dsheper@ctcc.gov.za

A public meeting on the issue will be held later this month.



Farmers to crane necks for endangered species

(66) BD 17/7/98

Josey Ballenger

A CENSUS of SA's endangered cranes will take place over a 36-hour period later this month.

The national crane conservation project, a joint venture between parastatal Eskom and the Endangered Wildlife Trust, is urging landowners in the Dullstroom area in Mpumalanga, central Karoo in the Northern Cape; Overberg in the Western Cape; KwaZulu-Natal; Free State and the Eastern Cape, to give information on sightings from 6am on July 24 to 6pm the next day.

Kevin McCann, the chairman of the national crane working group, said the project aimed to put in place "cost effective planning" for the conservation of the grey, blue crowned and wattled cranes.

He said there were between 14 000 and 21 000 blue cranes in SA, 3 000 to 3 500 crowned cranes, but only 250 wattled cranes, the most endangered of the lot.

The last lions of Hluhluwe

(56) M+G 17-23/7/98

Nicky Barker

KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service officials are deeply concerned about the future of the lion population in their flagship Hluhluwe-Umfolozi game reserve.

The 80 lions left have been diagnosed with bovine tuberculosis (TB), an exotic disease introduced in the past 50 years by cattle imported from Europe.

There is no cure for wild animals with TB, and there is little hope for the last lions of Hluhluwe.

A few years ago tourists began writing letters to newspapers, complaining that the lions looked sickly. The Hluhluwe veterinarians and rangers, who had been aware of the problem for some time, stepped up their observations.

"We darted some lions and examined them for every infection known to occur in lions," says Dr Dave Cooper, the nature conservation service veterinarian, "but after screening about a quarter of the lion population of the park, we couldn't find anything. We had to give the lions a clean bill of health, but cub mortality in some prides continued to be abnormally high and the lions still looked sick and weak."

The only answer was that the lions were showing genetic weaknesses because of inbreeding — a likely explanation in view of their history.

Dangerous inbreeding? This photograph of a sickly lioness was taken by Leon Steyn, a section ranger in the Hluhluwe reserve

"The first lion arrived in the reserve entirely under his own steam," says Dave Balfour, the reserve's regional ecologist. "It is believed he wandered down from Mozambique, pursued by every gun-happy farmer in Zululand who had pretensions to bagging a lion. At that stage Hluhluwe was not fenced, and he obviously found the place refreshingly free of gun-toting humans."

For two years he lived on his own, and then he was joined mysteriously by two lionesses. It is suspected they were smuggled in by game rangers who wanted a lion population in Hluhluwe but did not feel like filling in the forms. The present lions of the park are all descended from this founder population.

In the late 1980s there was extensive culling of male lions in the park, as they had the potential to be problem animals. This further thinned out the gene pool. The theory about dangerous inbreeding was taken seriously enough for the park management to motivate for a fresh batch of lions to be brought in from Etosha.

But then disaster struck. At the beginning of this year a chance test on a lion showed it had TB, a disease that is cutting a swathe through the wild animal populations of South African game reserves. It is a slow degenerative disease in animals, carried by buffalo, and the lions would have picked up the virus by preying on infected animals.

The discovery of TB in the Hluhluwe felines changed everything. It was no longer feasible to introduce lions if they were going to run the risk of becoming infected.

Research into TB in wild animals is in its infancy — a full-time research study was launched only a few months ago at the Kruger National Park. Very little is known about how the disease is spread, how it affects animals and what its symptoms are.

It is not even known how many animals, or which animals, are infected. The only way to establish its presence is through a post-mortem. But there is, at the moment, no cure.

Dr Dewald Keet, National Parks Board veterinarian, says only buffalo and cattle are carriers of the disease. Even though all animals can be infected by buffalo — even the smaller animals like jackals and scrub hares — they cannot catch the bacteria from each other.

The only answer, and one which is currently being put into practice by the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service, is to identify and round up disease-free groups of animals and transport them to areas like Kimberley, where the dry air prevents the natural spread of the disease. Groups of disease-free buffalo from Hluhluwe have already been moved to safety.

If the infection continues to rage, all the diseased animals in the park would have to be removed or destroyed and replaced with disease-free buffalo. Buffalo — although extremely expensive to quarantine — are fairly easy to acclimatise to captivity. Lions would be a lot more difficult, and small animals like scrub hares and jackals would be impossible.

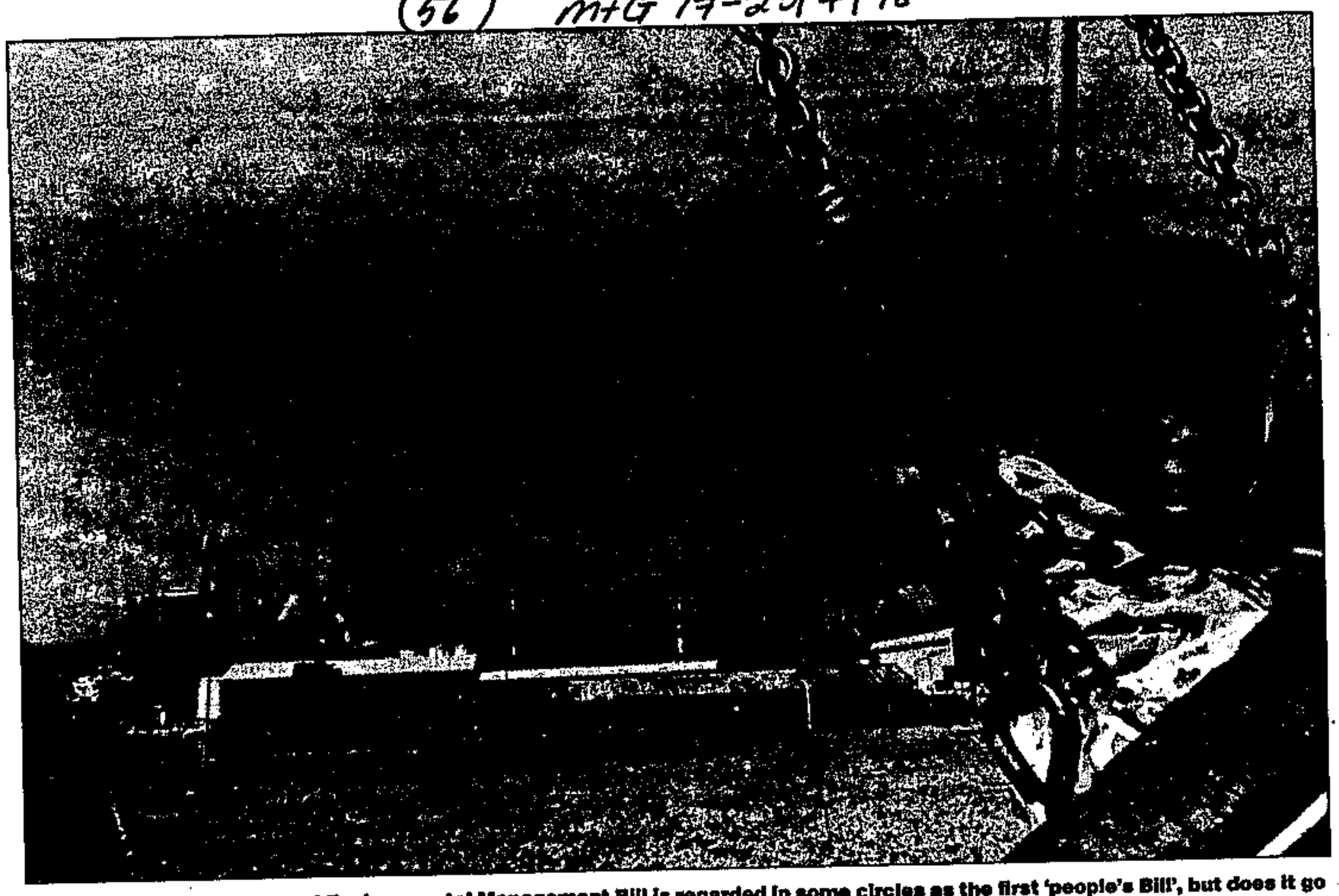
It might become necessary to remove all the buffalo, wait for the disease to play itself out, and then move in a new crop of disease-free animals. This is an option that is not even being considered by the conservation service until the disease is better understood.

Whatever the options are, there is one certainty: the process will be a long one. Until the disease is better understood, or perhaps until the disease has played itself out in its enclosed areas, the last lions of Hluhluwe appear to be doomed.

Putting the people in charge

(56) M+G 17-23/7/98

Saliem Fakir *discusses the pros and cons of the proposed environmental management legislation*



Ups and downs: The National Environmental Management Bill is regarded in some circles as the first 'people's Bill', but does it go far enough? PHOTOGRAPH: LEIGH MATTHEWMAN

The National Environmental Management Bill, released recently by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, is a significant contribution to the evolution of environmental management.

It may well have shortcomings, particularly given the time frame in which it was drafted, but its implications are far-reaching and perhaps revolutionary. In some circles it is regarded as the first "people's Bill".

The Bill has several key intentions:

- to do away with the current outdated Environmental Conservation Act, since it is not consistent with the new Constitution;
- to provide mechanisms for the right to a healthy environment enshrined in the Bill of Rights, and to give both the state and civil society the means to ensure the enforcement of environmental rights; and
- to give effect to the national policy on environmental management, which has gone through a process of wide consultation since 1995. In this sense it can be described as a Bill about environmental governance.

It places a great deal of emphasis on co-ordination within the government. It also provides for participation by civil society, and for conflict management.

Perhaps its main weakness is that it focuses on national and provincial government, and has not brought local government to the centre stage.

Another weakness is that, while the general spirit of the Bill is aimed at improving environmental governance, its authors have not quite defined what governance means, and this could open it up to a range of interpretations.

The Bill should provide greater clarity on the demarcation between the roles of the state and civil society in issues of governance. In the environmental sector, this has not been sorted out, and civil society is of the view that it needs to participate more in decision-making.

The Bill makes it possible for the minister of environmental affairs and tourism to appoint a national environmental forum to "inform the minister of the views of interested and affected parties".

I suspect this role will be challenged by civil society as it has the connotation of the relaying of information, rather than active participation in policy debates and influence over the way in which the government implements policy.

In fact, the Bill limits the role of civil society in vague terms to "the application of principles and setting and achieving of objectives and priorities for environmental governance".

Perhaps the word "advice" will provide a much broader scope to engage the perspectives of civil society. It seems the envisaged forum has quite a weak role to play, compared to the previous council for the environment.

While the proposals for the forum are the downside, the upside for civil society is that the Bill gives private individuals, groups and associations greater leverage to fight in the courts for a better environment.

It makes provision for private prosecutions, and strengthens the standing of individuals and groups in taking up public-interest causes when environmental rights are infringed.

It makes it possible for litigation to be pursued without having to have the process channelled via the minister.

The upside for civil society is that the Bill gives private individuals, groups and associations greater leverage to fight in the courts for a better environment

In the chapters dealing with fair decision-making and integrated environmental management, the Bill obliges organs of the state to consult or create participatory processes for interested and affected parties, further extending the role of civil society outside the national environmental forum.

Then there is the exciting innovation which enables individuals or community members to enter into special environmental-management co-operation agreements with the minister to promote compliance. In this way the state, through law, can mobilise civil-society resources to achieve common policy objectives.

Compared to the old Act, the Bill provides for a much better role for the committee for environmental co-ordination, which will manage inter-governmental deliberations.

The committee has representation from key national and provincial departments involved in environmental management, and is seen as a mechanism to ensure that inter-governmental co-operation and integration are enhanced.

The committee will be chaired by the director general of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, who is directly accountable to the minister.

The committee can request environmental implementation plans from government agencies and departments.

These will have to show how the relevant national department or province will ensure that its policies, plans and programmes will meet the objectives of sustainable development and better environmental management.

The implementation plans are important as the minister can request departments to submit reasons for non-adherence to objectives and plans, which may explain some of the jittery reactions various national and provincial departments may take towards the plans.

The committee and the provisions on implementation plans make it possible for the department to act as "lead agent" in protecting the environment. This it hopes to do without feeling it has to tread on the toes of other ministries.

The Bill makes it possible to establish co-operative governance through "memorandums of understanding" with other departments.

These ensure that the lead agency does not just give directives; they force it to consult and come to agreement with other departments in meeting common environmental objectives and standards.

The implementation plans in the end seem to provide both a benchmark and a way for the department to have some meaningful control over the implementation of environmental management.

The implications of the Bill will have stunned many people, in particular the business community and certain organs of state, as it does have real teeth.

However, this is also dependent on how fast the department is able to develop a cadre of dedicated staff to push the ideals of the Bill through.

Saliem Fakir is country programme co-ordinator of the IUCN-World Conservation Union

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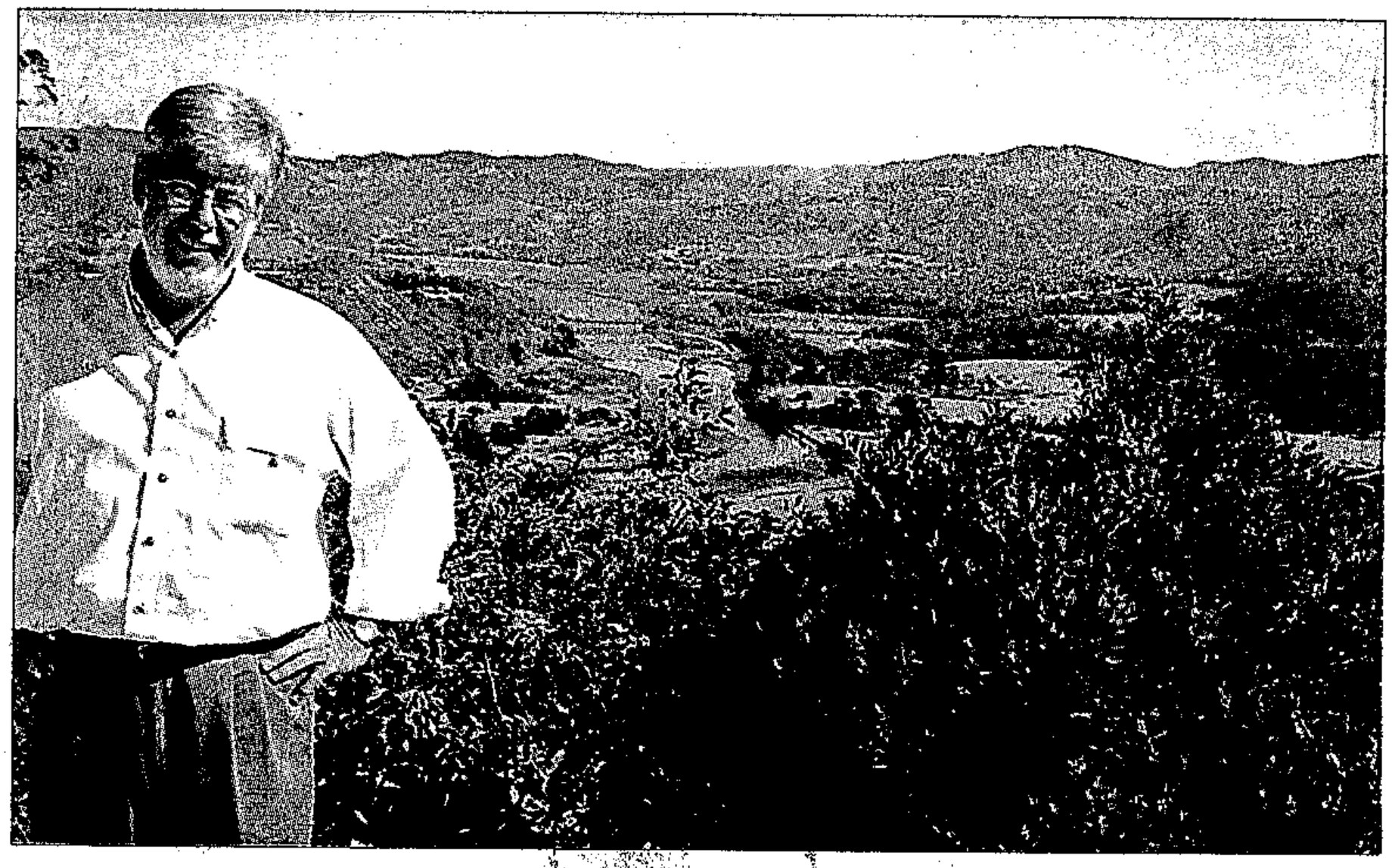


RIVERSIDE: Greg Metzer, director at Eastford Nature Reserve, with the Knysna River in the background

Farm added to reserve at Knysna

(56) ARG 18/7/98

The Eastford Nature Reserve at Knysna, the only Cape Department of Nature Conservation reserve to allow limited residential development, has acquired a further 179 hectares in the form of Westford farm.

Greg Metzer, development and marketing director at Eastford, said that although they had received many enquiries, the developers would not take deposits for plots or sign agreements until all planning proposals had been ratified by the province.

"It could take as long as nine to 12 months to get full planning permission," he said. "The big attraction at Westford is the 2000 metres of Knysna River frontage that it makes available to people who live here.

No building would be allowed on the flood plain or within 50 metres of the river bank.

Westford would be upmarket but provision was also being made to create smaller plots suitable for less affluent people.

CAPE ARGUS, **MONDAY**, JULY 20, 1998

Endangered cranes get their own census

Overberg farmers to help list birds

(56) ARG 20/7/98

Emblem: our national bird, the blue crane

STAFF REPORTER

We have had our national census, now the Cape Nature Conservation says it's time to hold a countrywide census of our national bird – the blue crane.

The critically endangered birds, found almost exclusively in South Africa with possibly more than half finding a home in the Overberg wheat belt, will be counted on July 24 and 25.

Nature conservation spokeswoman Susan van der Merwe says the count will be conducted to determine exactly how many blue cranes occur in the Swartland and Overberg regions.

"This forms part of a national crane census to obtain accurate population figures for the three crane species – the blue crane, the grey crowned crane and the wattled crane – that are found in the country," Ms Van der Merwe said.

Small populations of the blue crane can also be found in Namibia, Swaziland and Lesotho.

Ms Van der Merwe said due to the alarming decline in the bird numbers, obtaining accurate figures had become a priority to ensure cost-effective and efficient conservation efforts.

"Previous counts have provided interesting information.

"Although very little is known about the Swartland's young blue crane population, scientists are certain numbers are increasing."

She said that the success of the census would depend on the co-operation of landowners who would be asked to count the number of birds on their property during the 48-hour period.

Cape Nature Conservation and the Overberg Crane Group would co-ordinate the count and chart the way forward from there.

Mokaba fends off attacks on legislation (56)

Josey Ballenger BD 21/7/98

THE National Environmental Management Bill would replace SA's fragmented legislation and would be a framework on which to add other strong measures later, Deputy Environmental Affairs Minister Peter Mokaba said in an interview.

Mokaba defended the proposed bill against attacks by the Environmental Justice Networking Forum — an umbrella group representing more than 500 nongovernmental organisations — saying it would be SA's strongest piece of environmental legislation yet, despite recent omissions and changes to it.

He said changes were made because of concerns expressed by other government departments and provincial MECs about the bureaucracy involved in running proposed structures.

They felt an environmental tribunal and board of inquiry, for example, would "impose an administrative burden", and that civil society could intervene too much in the originally proposed advisory council.

The environmental forum has criticised the latest draft for watering down the advisory council and for turning it into an informative forum that the minister "may, rather than must, establish". In addition, Mokaba said, the minister would be able to choose five members, rather than the 13 originally envisioned to be selected by stakeholders.

Mokaba said legal questions, such as whether a tribunal would be subject to the minister's approval or would supersede his opinion, also needed to be resolved. They and other issues, like biodiversity, pollution control and waste management, would have to be addressed later in amendments to the bill. The bill, which is open to public comment until July 29, will soon be discussed by the department, and by business and labour representatives at a National Economic, Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) meeting. The National Assembly's environmental affairs portfolio committee is expected to start hearings on the bill in early September.

Mussel banks affected by oil spill

(56) CT 21/7/98

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

ABOUT 12 000 litres of heavy fuel oil from an overturned truck spilled on to a Simon's Town beach after a decision was taken not to close the stormwater drains.

The truck jack-knifed and overturned on Dido Valley Road at 5.30pm on Sunday, spilling tons of oil.

The oil ran down the incline into Main Road, where it flowed into two stormwater drains that pass under the railway line to the beach. Some flowed into the sea.

The slick has moved to Glencairn and Fish Hoek beaches, but a strong on-shore wind has kept it from spreading out to sea.

Rick Harding, of the Department of Environment's oil pollution control section, said yesterday that before he arrived at the scene a decision was taken not to close the stormwater drains so that the road could be cleared of oil.

"I don't know who took that decision."

By the time the drains were covered later, most of the oil had flowed through them.

Members of Fish Hoek Civil Defence, the SA Navy and South Peninsula Municipality emergency staff were on the scene soon after the spill.

Sand was spread over almost a kilometre of road to absorb the oil, while firemen created a dam on the beach to contain the oil pouring from one of the stormwater outlet pipes.

John Britz, director of a pollution clean-up company commissioned by the truck's insurers, said it had been too late to contain the oil from the second stormwater outlet.

"The guys were incredibly efficient about digging the first dam," he said. "I've pumped out about 10 000 litres from the dam they built on the beach. Most of the rest — about 2 000 litres — has gone into the sea and on to the beaches."

It will take at least a week to clean the beaches ... So far we haven't picked up any oiled birds

Teams worked through Sunday night to clean up the oil. As the oil was heavy and sticky, they were able to "rake" it off the sand and bag it. Work stopped when the tide came in.

Harding said they had filled about 500 bags by noon yesterday.

Dean Ferreira, manager of South Peninsula's nature conservation department, said no oiled birds had been found, but the mussel banks would have been damaged.

"It spread to Glencairn and Fish Hoek beaches, which have mostly been cleaned up," he said.

"It will take at least a week to clean the beaches and longer for the rocks."

Ferreira said he had no knowledge of the stormwater drains being left open.

"By the time I got here at 7pm, they were covered," he said.

He estimated that 4 000 litres of oil were in the sea, on the sand and rocks and that only 8 000 litres had been recovered.

"We've been monitoring the penguins as Boulders Beach with SA National Parks and so far haven't picked up any oiled birds."

The SA National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds has appealed to the public to look out for any that are stained with oil.

"If you are able to catch the bird, gently place it in a box and keep it warm, but don't give it anything to eat or drink," said Sanccob's Cathy Williams.

"Call Sanccob or take it to the Rehabilitation Centre in Pentz Drive, Table View. We are also appealing for volunteers to work at the centre and for people with suitable vehicles to contact us about collecting oiled birds."

Sanccob's telephone numbers are (021) 557-6155 or 082 853 9890.

More join fight to mop up oil spill

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

(56)
ARG 21/7/98

More than 60 workers are being sent to Klein Vishoek beach between Simon's Town and Glencairn today to continue mopping up Sunday's oil spill.

About 12 tons of heavy furnace oil spilled on to the beach and into the sea after a road tanker jack-knifed at the entrance to Marine Oil Refiners at Dido Valley about 5pm.

So far the oil has not drifted to the African penguin breeding colony at nearby Boulders Beach, but small patches of oil have been reported on Glencairn and Fish Hoek beaches.

The head of the South Peninsula municipality's nature conservation department, Dean Ferreira, saidmost of the remaining oil was still at Klein Vishoek beach.

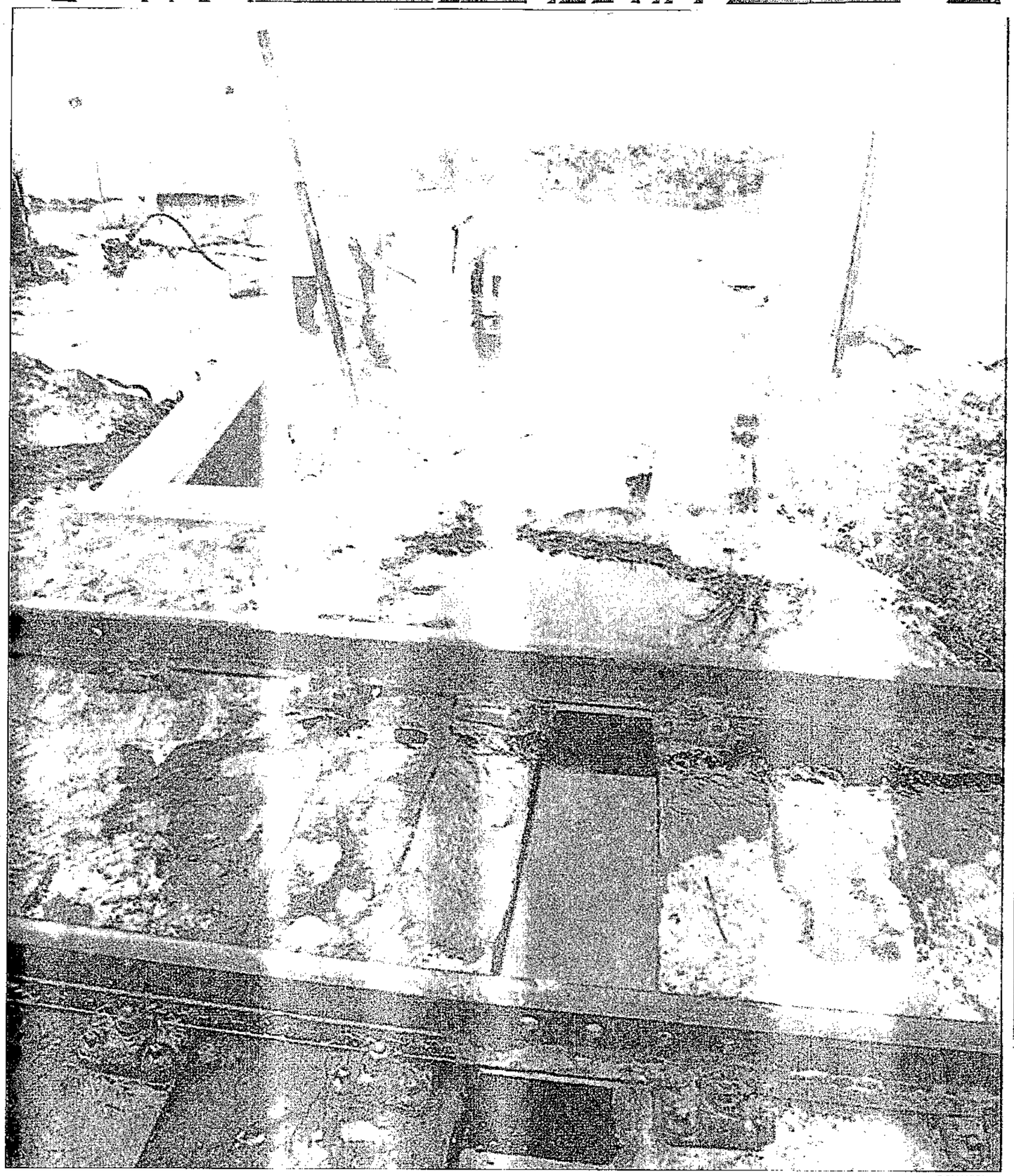
"We collected about 8 000 litres yesterday, and there's possibly still about 4 000 litres out there.

"Fortunately it didn't spread very far and has been concentrated against the rocks at the corner of the beach. Also the sea has begun to disperse it.

"There haven't been any signs of oiled birds or penguins, but that's only a minor part of the problem. The oil could affect resources like mussels on the rocky shelf of this coastline."

Twenty men worked through the night on Sunday to mop up tons of oil on the beach, and yesterday were relieved by a team of about 50.

The tanker unit overturned, allegedly after the driver braked hard to avoid a collision with a car, and oil spilled on to the road and into two stormwater drains leading to the beach before they could be closed.



ROY WIGLEY

Troubled waters: oil is pumped from a sand coffer dam hastily built on the beach around a stormwater outlet

Kirstenbosch plans under fire

ARG 21/7/98 (56)

BEAUREGARD TROMP
STAFF REPORTER

Bishopscourt residents are up in arms over developments at Kirstenbosch designed to attract more tourists.

They argued to loud applause at a meeting last night that the new buildings were unsightly and that the "place would be like a disco with loud music and noise".

They said they were angry because they had not been consulted.

Development of the National Botanical Gardens has been under way for the past six years. It is aimed, among other things, at making the gardens more tourist-friendly and accessible to blacks.

"The Government has already indicated it intends to move away from green issues to brown issues like uplifting the quality of life of all South Africans," said Brian Huntley, chief executive of the Botanical Institute.

At the moment the Government provides half of the R6-million needed to run the gardens, with R1,5-million coming from gate takings and the difference from individual sponsors. The gardens get about 600 000 visitors a year.

One resident said he hoped the gardens would retain their informal atmosphere.

Many residents felt that planning had occurred "virtually underground" with meetings taking place at short notice.

There was a hush when one person suggested that residents should stop thinking of Kirstenbosch as their own private park "and share it with the 50-million other people in the country".

Koeberg 'waste crisis' fear

Eskom denies storage space running out

ARG 22/7/98

(56)

ED WEST
DEPUTY BUSINESS EDITOR

Koeberg is running out of space to store high-radiation nuclear waste and immediate action is needed, an environmental group has charged.

Earthlife Africa was addressing a public meeting held by a parliamentary portfolio committee on the draft white paper on energy policy yesterday.

But Eskom says there is no crisis.

Earthlife Africa spokeswoman Katy Watermeler told the committee the group had received information that the ponds at Koeberg where high-level nuclear waste was stored would be full by August, and that there was currently no other site where this material could be stored.

The Vaalputs nuclear dump site in the Northern Cape was licensed to accept only low-radiation waste. "There is an impending crisis at Koeberg," she said.

The organisation had been alerted to the problem through court papers.

Eskom nuclear power spokesman Tony Stott said there was no impending crisis.

One of Koeberg's nuclear reactors had enough storage capacity until the end of the year, with additional storage space now being put in place, while the other reactor still had enough space to store spent nuclear fuel for a number of years.

A licence for additional storage capacity was being sought from the Nuclear Safety Council, he said.

Earthlife Africa also expressed concern about possible effects on workers and communities during the transport of nuclear waste to the Vaalputs site.

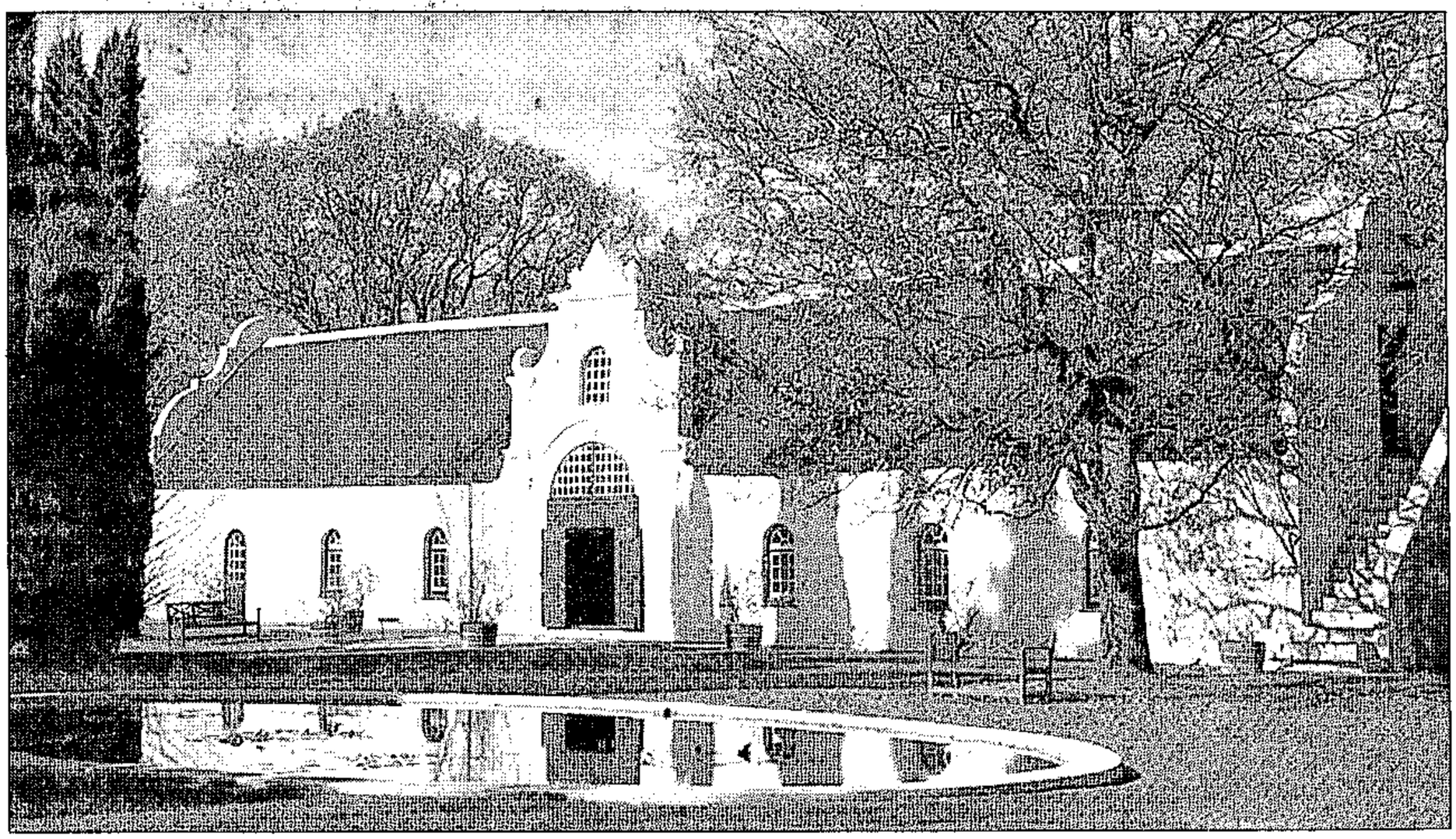
"The urgency is now ... there is technology being placed on the table that is not safe and has already been banned by the German government," said Earthlife Africa spokesman David Chown.

Both environmental agencies at the meeting, Earthlife Africa and the Environmental Monitoring Group, slammed lack of consultation with the public in the formulation of the draft white paper.

Corporate care of our heritage

WOUTER VAN WARMELO

In the third of a series of articles on past winners of the Cape Times Centenary Awards for Conservation, we look at examples of corporate and professional involvement in the conservation of our heritage.



Anglo American's restored Vergelegen in Somerset West, has a library in the old winery

INCREASINGLY, the corporate world is demonstrating a responsibility towards the conservation of our heritage. Anglo American Farms Limited, which won a Cape Times Centenary Award in 1990, is one example of this. The award was particularly for the work done at the wine farm Boschendal.

Boschendal was first granted (and farmed) in 1685 and was given the name by which it is still known. It was bought by Abraham de Villiers in 1715 and remained in that family's hands until 1879. Then, a little over a hundred years ago in 1897, Cecil Rhodes bought Boschendal and other farms in the Groot Drakenstein valley. And so Rhodes Fruit Farms, as the whole farming complex is still known, was created.

The whole complex at Boschendal took on a new life when restoration was initiated by Anglo American Farms in 1976. Now thousands of people visit this superb national monument every year. Today, with a full-time curator, conservation efforts continue under the guidance of appropriate experts, almost on a daily basis, not only at Boschendal, but also at other Rhodes Fruit Farms properties such as Rhodes' cottage and the farms Good Hope, Nieuwe Dorp and Rhone. Local communities have benefited from the resulting increased tourism as well as from farm employment, conservation and restoration work.

There is, furthermore, a considerable area of fynbos which is well looked after and from which they can and do harvest proteas and other plants for display in various parts of Boschendal.

Another farm also owned by Anglo American Farms, Vergelegen, in a beautiful wooded area at Somerset West, won an award in its own right in 1993. Originally the home of Governor Willem Adriaan, son of Simon van der Stel, Vergelegen has had its ups and downs over three centuries. But since 1917, when its restoration started in earnest, the farm has, by any measure, rightly taken its place as a significant part of this country's heritage.

> Even if conservation has come too late, sometimes it is still worthwhile to halt any further deterioration, saving what still exists.
>
> CT 23/7/98

It is through the efforts of Anglo American Farms Limited, conservation architects, archaeologists, landscape architects, historians, staff, local people and others, that this is so. And the conservation work didn't stop in 1993 when it was recognised with a Cape Times Centenary Award — it continues to this day.

It is a Heritage Area. It includes the restored homestead, its octagonal garden and the archaeological remains of an old water mill, slave lodge and original winery, and it has been set up to give visitors a valuable insight into the history of Vergelegen and of life in the Cape over the last 300 years. The permanent exhibition in the interpretive centre adds to the visitor's experience. (It was nice to see the Cape Times Centenary Award certificate and medal also displayed!) I believe that this excellent 300-year-old example of our cultural heritage is in safe hands.

Jan Corewijn won his award in 1990 for his contribution towards the conservation of a number of interesting and historically important objects of our architectural heritage. Sometimes these included whole buildings and sometimes they were only parts of buildings. He fully restored the pediment of the Cultural History Museum in Cape Town. However, to prevent future weathering and deterioration, the pediment has now been placed in the museum. Meanwhile he produced an identical replica to be put into position above the front door.

He has also restored the pediment of the wine cellar at Groot Constantia, identifying the original measurements and style from Arthur Elliot photographs taken many decades ago.

To me, the striving for historical accuracy is vitally important and it seems that Corewijn puts a high premium on that. He has conducted conservation work at the Castle, the newly reopened Heritage Square and the huge wall paintings in the old post office building.

Mind you, we know that in many cases attempts at restoration or even conservation come too late. But sometimes it is still worthwhile to halt any further deterioration, saving what there is. Corewijn calls this "arrestation". He has done this at the old East Fort at Hout Bay, continuing the excellent work done there by the late Hugh Floyd.

Nuclear watchdog quells Koeberg 'crisis' fears

Power station has enough storage space for waste, says safety council

(4th) ARGT 23/7/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Eskom has enough storage space at Koeberg nuclear power station for the high-level nuclear waste resulting from just one more annual re-loading of one of its reactors next year.

But a decision will have to be taken by March next year on how to store additional high-level waste from further reloadings of this reactor.

That's the official word from the Council for Nuclear Safety (CNS), South Africa's nuclear "policeman" which has a statutory duty to protect the public and workers from any danger relating to nuclear installations.

The Cape Argus asked the CNS to investigate the issue, after a dispute of fact in Parliament this week between Koeberg-operator Eskom and environmentalists.

Environmental group Earthlife Africa made a presentation to the parliamentary portfolio committee's public meeting on the Draft White Paper on Energy Policy on Monday.

They said they had information that the ponds at Koeberg, where high-level nuclear waste material was stored, would be full by August and that there was currently no other place to store it. The Vaalputs nuclear dump site in the far northern Cape was licensed to accept only low-level radiation waste, and there was an "impending crisis" at Koeberg.

But this was denied by Eskom nuclear power spokesman Tony Stott, who told the portfolio committee that Koeberg's one nuclear reactor had enough storage capacity until the end of the year.

Additional storage space was currently being put into place, while the other reactor still had enough space to store spent nuclear fuel for a number of years, Mr Stott said.

Earthlife Africa also expressed its concern about the effects on workers and communities during the transport of nuclear waste to the Vaalputs site.

Yesterday, CNS manager Phil Nkhwashu sent one of his inspectors at Koeberg to check on the exact amount of available storage space, after a request from the Cape Argus.

Mr Nkhwashu reported the inspector had told him that Eskom had storage space for one more annual reloading from one of its reactors.

He confirmed that Eskom had already applied to the CNS for a modification to its licence to operate Koeberg.

The modification, if approved, would allow Eskom to re-rack its high-level waste storage system in the ponds at Koeberg.

In terms of its original licence, Eskom had sufficient storage space for high-level waste from both its reactors for 20 years, starting in 1984. The proposed re-racking will create space to store high-level waste until 2024.

"That modification has not been granted yet. We're still looking at Eskom's application," Mr Nkhwashu said.

A final decision about this had to be taken before the end of March next year.

Responding to the environmentalists' concerns about the transport of nuclear waste to Vaalputs and the possible dangers of exposure to radiation by workers, Mr Nkhwashu said the CNS was South Africa's national authority responsible for applying International Atomic Energy Agency regulations.

"We do this with diligence," Mr Nkhwashu said.

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Cape planning battle looms

'Flawed' bill unconstitutional, says ANC

(56) ARG 23/7/98

ANDREA WEISS
POLITICAL REPORTER

A constitutional battle is brewing over a controversial planning bill the African National Congress says threatens the unique environment of the Western Cape.

The Western Cape Planning and Development Bill has been slated by the ANC as giving the provincial minister the power to "ride roughshod" over community and local government concerns.

The ANC has cited the examples of Rooi Els and Camps Bay, where provincial decisions overturned the wishes of local authorities and communities.

Local authorities are also at loggerheads with the provincial government on the grounds that the bill takes away the constitutional right of municipalities to regulate planning in their own areas.

The bill is being prepared in place of the national Development Facilitation Act, which the Western Cape has decided not to apply in this province. Among the aims of this act is the fast-tracking of housing development by making land available faster.

A legal team consisting of provincial and local government representatives has reached an impasse, says the ANC, which is suggesting that the matter go back to the drawing-board.

The bill is due to be debated before a provincial government standing committee over the next fortnight, but the ANC has already signalled it will refer the matter to the Constitutional Court should it be pushed through.

Legal opinion supplied to the National Party-controlled Cape Metropolitan Council is that the bill is "so fundamentally flawed" it should be redrawn.

ANC spokesman Garth Strachan described the bill as attempting to "treat a cancer patient for a cold".

"This bill is terminally ill. It should be withdrawn. The numerous clauses, including those relating to the powers and functions of local government, which are considered unconstitutional, are reason enough to withdraw it."

Mr Strachan also accused the NP of trying to continue "promoting a culture of patronage" by controlling development planning.

On the issue of the environment, Mr Strachan cited the case of a Rooi Els rezoning by provincial minister Kobus Meiring, which went against a recommendation from the local council.

Mr Strachan said it transpired that there had been no environmental study at Rooi Els, but rather only a "scoping analysis" of less than three pages, based on aerial photography. This had been used to overturn the local council's decision, in spite of local ratepayers presenting a much more thoroughly prepared document.

"The proposed bill simply strengthens the power of the MEC to ride roughshod over community and local government concerns."

Rose Sonto, ANC spokesman on housing, said the failure of the NP to implement the Development Facilitation Act for four years hamstrung the rapid release of land for development. This made land invasions an "inevitable outcome of such a short-sighted approach".

The ANC has also given notice that it will invoke clause 122 of the constitution, which allows 20% of members of the provincial legislature to apply to the Constitutional Court to declare a provincial act unconstitutional.

An environment Bill with teeth

M+G 24-30/7/98 (56)

Mariam Mayet

The draft Environmental Management Bill ("Putting the people in charge", *Monitor*, July 17 to 23) marks an extremely important departure from previous environmental policy and legislation.

Unlike most current environmental legislation, which has been criticised for being a paper tiger, this Bill contains provisions that empower citizens to take up the cudgels for the protection of the natural and human environment.

The Bill widens the scope in terms of which affected individuals, communities, organisations and groups may seek legal redress. It allows legal action to be instituted in the interests of protecting the environment, and extends the provisions on legal standing in the Constitution.

The prospect of having costs granted against a person seeking redress in the interest of protecting the environment is done away with. The Bill advises the courts not to award costs against a complainant where legal action has failed if such action is brought in the interests of the environment.

The new law would be a marked improvement on the relevant provisions of the draft Open Democracy Bill. In its current form, the Open Democracy Bill excludes access by citizens to environmental information held by private bodies. It also contains a litany of exceptions to access to information held by government bodies, and in so doing runs the risk of excluding the most basic information required to protect the environment.

While the Environmental Management Bill does contain exceptions to access to environmental information held by organs of state, they have been kept to the barest minimum and are designed not to impede meaningful access to information.

The Bill also refines our current law relating to private prosecutions. It allows private prosecutions of those who transgress legislation designed to protect the environment by allowing such prosecutions to be instituted in the public interest or in the interest of protecting the environment. There is a fast-track mechanism for instituting prosecutions.

It would no longer be more profitable for transgressors to pay fines than comply with environmental legislation. Courts could order transgressors to pay out the value of any advantage gained or likely to be gained as a result of their transgression.

The courts would also have the discretion to order transgressors to pay the costs of a prosecution and of the investigation. The costs of the investigation may include expert evidence and the securing of technical information, lab analysis and so forth.

Finally, the Bill creates a duty of care that places a rather onerous duty on every person who "knows or reasonably suspects that his actions or omissions may cause harm to the environment", through the taking of "every possible reasonable measure to prevent harm to the environment from occurring, continuing or recurring". The sweeping nature of this provision may make it impractical.

The Bill is not without controversy, and will not find favour with all sectors of society. It does, however, give teeth to environmental legislation and has the potential to affect the lives of all South Africans.

Mariam Mayet is a specialist in environmental policy and law

Mountain access plans get 'overwhelming' response

(56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

ARG 27/7/98

There has been an "overwhelming" response to draft proposals for environmentally-friendly methods of introducing the hundreds of thousands of visitors expected in the new Cape Peninsula National Park each year, say park officials.

The closing date for submissions about the proposals has now been extended by three weeks until August 21.

Also, the park officials will conduct three workshops before this deadline to assist people who want to make submissions.

The draft proposals are in a "Draft Development Framework" document which was compiled in May. But this document was only sent to the media last week, by one of the environmental organisations involved.

This has led to accusations that the proposals – some of which are proving controversial, such as additional cableways or funiculars up the mountain – were deliberately kept under wraps.

But this has been strongly denied by SA National Parks (formerly the National Parks Board), which has apologised for not involving the press at an early stage of the process.

The document points out that access points to the Peninsula mountain chain have been recognised as critical "high impact" areas, and that a sound conservation framework is required.

"The concept of 'gateways' which serve to channel and direct visitors and their impacts is, therefore, central," it states.

Cape Peninsula National Park planning manager Paul Britton told the Cape Argus that the initial proposals set out in the draft document had been workshopped on three occasions during May with several non-government environmental organisations, community-based organisations, members of the park's advisory committee and the business sector.

"The original internal document was then substantially amended in response to comments received," Mr Britton said.

He emphasised that the "gateways" referred to in the document were not intended to replace the numerous entry points to the park which are freely used on a daily basis by local residents. Instead, the gateways were proposed as a means of encouraging the ever-creasing number of visitors to enter the park at specific points, he said.

Mr Britton acknowledged that the media had been omitted from the process, but said this had been a mistake. "We slipped up at the beginning of the process and sincerely apologise for this," he said.

There had been no intention to keep the public in the dark. "There was nothing secret about the draft. In fact, we are extremely encouraged by the overwhelming response received to date. The wider the exposure, the better.

"What is important to note is that we have agreed to conduct three workshops with all concerned members of the public to assist them in compiling their comments before August 21."

According to the draft document, one the public's comments have been incorporated, the proposals will be sent to the local authorities in the Peninsula for endorsement before being considered by the park's advisory committee for recommendation to the directors and board of SA National Parks, who must give their final approval.

The Star ... Monday July 27 1998

Concern over Gauteng air pollution levels

Star 27/7/98 (56)

Smog causing serious respiratory illnesses

By Robert Brand

The air pollution over Johannesburg and the rest of Gauteng this winter is at its worst, experts say.

The unusually warm winter weather has conspired with smoke belching from factory stacks, residential coal fires and veld fires to cover Gauteng with a blanket of smog which can cause serious and chronic respiratory illnesses, especially in children.

"This year it is particularly bad ... I'm worried that it is worse than other years," said Martin Lloyd, chief air pollution control officer of the Department of Environmental Affairs.

Jabulani Sithole, head of the Soweto region of the National Association for Clean Air, agreed: "We expect our samples to confirm that we are seeing the worst pollution ever."

Most experts agree the main contributors to the smog are coal fires for heating and cooking in urban homes, and veld fires, although industry and the massive Highveld power stations are not blameless.

Other contributors are vehicle exhaust fumes and dust from unpaved roads.

The pollutants have been trapped by high-pressure systems prevailing over the interior of the country for most of June, causing the unprecedented buildup of smog.

"The quantities of pollution emitted ... compare easily to Los Angeles. What makes it worse are weather patterns," said Dr Stuart Piketh of the Schonland research centre for nuclear sciences at Wits University.

Studies conducted under the auspices of the Medical Research Council have shown a higher prevalence of respiratory disease in children in some of the worst polluted Gauteng townships.

Dr Petro Terblanche of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, who is also president of the National Association for Clean Air, confirmed that smog causes chronic health problems.

It affects the sinuses and nasal passages, which causes children, especially, to breathe through the mouth, thus bypassing the natural filtration system of the nose.

Existing legislation gives the Government the power to monitor emissions from industrial sources, coal fires and vehicles, but it leaves much of the policing to local authorities. Because of a shortage of monitoring staff at the Department of Environmental Affairs, industries are largely left to police themselves.

South Africa's emission control standards for industry are far below those of developed countries, said Piketh.

Although legislation to control pollution is in the pipeline, it would be expensive to enforce emission standards on a par with those of Europe and the US. The question is whether the country can afford it.

Bill gives greater powers to SA National Parks

(66)

ARG 28/7/98

Draft legislation allowing the board of South African National Parks to accept and receive land or mineral rights donated or bequeathed for the purposes of a national park, was tabled in Parliament today.

The National Parks Amendment Bill also allows for the exchange of land or mineral rights for other land, and removes limitations placed on the board by the National Parks Act of 1976, which allowed it to acquire more land only through purchase or expropriation.

It extends the application of the 1976 Act to cover all areas in South Africa where it was not in force. And the bill makes it an offence for a private person to be found in possession of any animal or carcass, or part thereof, within a national park. – Sapa

Parliament puts pressure on Thor Chemicals to clean up

(56) BD 28/7/98

David Greybe

CAPE TOWN — Parliament has lost patience with Thor Chemicals and the environmental affairs and tourism department for the long delay in resolving problems linked to highly dangerous chemical waste at Thor's Kwa-Zulu Natal plant.

The environmental affairs and tourism committee said yesterday it could not wait until next year, when the department's national waste management strategy was expected to be implemented.

The committee has called Thor and the departments of environmental affairs and tourism, health, labour and water affairs to meet chemical waste experts on August 17 to find a way out of the impasse.

Thor must say how it plans to resolve the problem, environmental affairs must answer on the failure of a departmental steering committee to act despite a damning report 15 months ago, and water affairs and labour must explain their licensing of Thor's mercury recycling operations in Cato Ridge.

Health will be asked to help in ascertaining the impact of the plant's operations on the health of members of local communities and Thor's workforce.

The committee also gave notice it was considering drafting and enacting, as a matter of urgency, new legislation as an interim measure to be used against Thor's mercury recycling operations at its plant in Cato Ridge.

Committee chairman Gwen Mahlangu indicated that such an "interim law", if enacted, could also be used against other companies, such as mining houses, guilty of bad waste management practices. "We have lost patience," Mahlangu said.

An independent inquiry into Thor reported to Minister Pallo Jordan in May last year that the chemical waste situation at Thor was "out of control".

It said Thor "must have realised at some point that it was not able to recycle the waste on its premises, let alone further waste which it was to receive both domestically and from overseas".

The commission concluded that the only viable option was "to treat the mercury waste in an environmentally friendly manner by recycling via incineration or roasting".

If the experts recommended incineration, Thor had no excuse not to implement it, Mahlangu said.

Legal action considered against Thor

(56)

KERRY CULLINAN
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

CT 28/7/98

LEGAL action may be taken against Thor Chemicals for failing to dispose of its huge stockpile of dangerous, spent mercury at its Cato Ridge plant.

The portfolio committee on Environmental Affairs hastily called in a legal adviser to brief members on whether there were grounds for legal action against Thor. This came after members expressed frustration at the way in which the Department of Environmental Affairs was handling the problem.

"This issue has been with us since we started here in Parliament in 1994," said an angry Gwen Mahlangu, chairperson of the committee. "The department has not been firm in its deliberations with Thor. While we are delaying, people are being exposed to mercury every day."

The legal adviser said it would be possible for the government to take action against Thor Chemicals in terms of the Constitution, as well as present legislation, which prohibited pollution of the environment.

However, the process may not be that simple. A commission of inquiry into Thor found that the government had been "grossly negligent" in allowing Thor to stockpile the mercury.

Also, Thor managing director Barry Longden said his company could not do anything unless it had a permit from the government. This permit had been revoked before the inquiry.

A White Paper on waste management, which will set out how waste should be dealt with in future, is expected by the end of this parliamentary session.

ARG 30/7/98

Big flap as council wipes out exotic duck 'pests'

ARG 30/7/98 (56)

VIVIEN HORLER
STAFF REPORTER

More than 400 exotic ducks on Sandvlei and other waterways have been killed by the South Peninsula municipality, enraging some residents but getting the nod from the Marina da Gama Residents' Association.

Another 150 exotic ducks at Sandvlei are scheduled to be poisoned.

Mallards are classified as a problem in the Western Cape because they overwhelm indigenous ducks.

Alan Hepple of Marina da Gama said a flock of nearly 50 white ducks and mallards that lived on the waterway near his home were fed poisoned bread by "officials".

"I demand to know who committed this vile, cowardly crime against nature, by whose authority the ducks were killed and for what reason," he said.

Dean Ferreira, South Peninsula manager of nature conservation, confirmed that his staff had killed the ducks because they were exotic and were causing the destruction of shyer, indigenous yellow-billed ducks.

"I'm a big bunny-hugger but at the rate things are going we'll one day have no indigenous ducks in the country. We have to ... protect our biodiversity."

Mr Ferreira said the municipality had acted only after extensive discussions with residents and local organisations and had the backing of Cape Nature Conservation.

He said that to the best of his knowledge, in 10 years no indigenous birds had been killed by mistake.

Other areas where exotics had been poisoned were Die Oog in Bergvliet, Steenberg and Silvermine.

Cherry Giljam of the Marina da Gama Residents' Association said she believed the killing of ducks was being done humanely.

Last ditch bid to halt rail strike

Sustainable development is core of environment bill

CT 31/7/98 (56)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

ENVIRONMENTAL issues will move to the centre stage of South African life when the National Environmental Bill is passed by Parliament this session.

At a press briefing yesterday, Environment Minister Pallo Jordan said the bill had implications for virtually every facet of the country's economic life.

Because it impinged on line functions of other government departments, it had been thoroughly discussed with them and consensus had been reached.

"The bill's main purpose is to bring cohesion to what has been until now a highly fragmented management of the environment, dispersed at national level among various government departments and also between the three tiers of government," Jordan said.

"There are a host of laws, ordinances and regulations dealing with the environment which are not necessarily consistent or coherent. This law will bring cohesion."

The core concept of the bill is sustainable development — something that has often been paid lip service in this country, but seldom put into practice.

It means that what we do to the environment today must not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. For instance, if we continue pumping pollutants into the air and water, people living a 100 years from now will have to bear the consequences, which in some cases could be life-threatening.

The bill states that for development to be sustainable, all environmental management must be integrated, and the full social and environmental costs and benefits of activities must be evaluated before they are set in motion.

"This is a first step in executing a paradigm shift for South Africa, so that sustainable development becomes the way we conduct our affairs in future," said Jordan.

"There will be a number of inter-departmental co-ordinating committees set up. We propose there will be a panel of ministers set up where environmental management looms large in line functions."

Jordan said in the public comments he had received on the new bill there were some elements in the business sector who had "not been too happy".

"We got a letter signed by a number of business organisations asking that we introduce the environmental regulations in a more piecemeal, incremental fashion. We think it is very short-sighted of them to approach the matter in this way. If one looks at international trends, environmental management has become one of the issues that is going to be weighed with response to best business practice.

"Either we take care of the business sector now, or we postpone it, which will simply mean it will be more expensive to South Africa in the long term.

"We're trying to make South Africa a net exporter of beneficial goods. If we don't take account of world trends now, and deal with them now, the market will force us to do it anyway four years down the line.

"What business and industry should understand is that we're not trying to raise anyone's costs, or to be anti-development, but we have to be realistic. One of the big problems with all industrialised countries is that we always minimised the environmental costs, which become social costs in the end.

"So whoever puts smog into the air which eventually makes people ill who have then to be hospitalised, that person does not pay for the health costs, but society pays," Jordan said.

The department will be creating new structures of enforcement to compel compliance with the regulations.

The bill will also bring government into line regarding environmental issues. Within a year after the bill has been passed, all central government departments exercising functions which may affect the environment, and every province, will have to draw up an environmental implementation plan.

They will have to describe how they will ensure that their policies, plans and programmes will comply with the principles in the bill, particularly sustainable development.

The bill also gives every individual access to state information regarding issues that affect the environment, including emissions to water, air and the disposal and storage of hazardous waste.

The bill gives everyone the right to take legal action against any person or organisation who breaches or threatens to breach the principles in the bill once it becomes law. This includes action against government departments at all three levels.

In terms of the "polluter pays" principle, anyone convicted of polluting the environment will have to pay court costs as well.

"This bill will help change people's minds and behaviour at a corporate and individual level. We recognise that we will need a huge information campaign to get people to change their behaviour," Jordan said.

Sewage spills still taint city's spruit

(56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Star 31/8/98

Past efforts to save the Braamfontein Spruit from pollution seem to have come to nought as continuous sewage and chemical spills into the waters are resulting in unacceptably high bacterial levels.

Even raw sewage has been allowed to spill uncontrolled into the spruit, which runs through several Johannesburg suburbs, for the past four months.

Residents from Greenside say the sewage is often visible in the water and an unpleasant odour continuously hangs over the area.

According to Greenside householder Stephanie Nel the problem has been getting consistently worse over the past months. "I usually walk the dogs along the Parkview golf course (through which the spruit flows) but the smell has been so bad, I can't do that anymore. You can clearly see the pollution," she said.

According to Nel, northern council officials have been looking into the problem and have taken samples of the water, which allowed them to trace the sewage back to Hillbrow.

"Apart from this there is also chemical pollution in the spruit, sometimes it is like pure fabric softener flowing down the spruit. A few weeks ago the spruit was a tomato-soup red," Nel added.

The Braamfontein Spruit Trust has been sounding alarm bells over the state of the spruit for several years. Council officials are looking into the matter.

Cabinet approves environment bill

BD 31/7/98

David Greybe

(56)

CAPE TOWN — The cabinet approved draft legislation on Wednesday which will lead to an integrated system of environmental management in SA.

"For the first time government makes good on the promise in the constitution that everyone has a right to a healthy environment," Environment and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan said yesterday.

The National Environmental Management Bill aimed to bring cohesion to the highly fragmented area of environmental management and to promote environmentally sustainable development, he said.

The bill would establish principles for decision-making on matters affecting the environment, institutions to promote co-operative governance and procedures for co-ordinating environmental functions exercised by organs of state.

Jordan said the bill was "not perfect" and could be improved upon over time, but he felt it "addresses the major concerns around environmental management that face the country at present".

The department had compiled a register of public comments and would consider them with other affected departments, Jordan said. The portfolio committee on environmental affairs and tourism and the select committee on land, agriculture and environmental affairs were expected to hold joint public hearings around the end of next month.

Jordan said arrangements were being made to ensure the bill was finalised during the current parliamentary session.

The current draft of the bill followed protracted negotiations between the departments of environmental affairs and tourism, minerals and energy, water affairs and forestry, land affairs and agriculture, trade and industry and housing. These departments currently shared responsibility for the environmental management and a mechanism was needed to allow them to have a say in the future.

The result was a proposed "committee for environmental co-ordination", to include the directors-general of the affected departments and be chaired by environmental affairs.

IT'S A FILTHY CITY: That's Pallo Jordan's verdict, but over the next few months all that is set to change in the once golden city **Photograph: CATHY PINNOCK**

Cleaning and greening initiatives in the pipeline for Johannesburg

By CHARLENE SMITH

Johannesburg is so filthy, it is looking like a London sewer, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan says.

"We are trying to push municipal governments into taking a firmer hand in terms of keeping cities clean. It is not that they are not cleaning, but they have not come to terms with the changed demography of cities."

To boost awareness and seek methods to improve environmental management and combat litter and pollution, Jordan's ministry will be launching a range of campaigns in September.

The campaigns will focus on cleaning and greening, with a strong anti-litter campaign and exhortations to people to clean the areas they live in. The Government will also encourage communities and business to look at environmental management campaigns as ways to create jobs – as some paper and plastics recycling companies are already doing.

Yesterday, Jordan's ministry published its White Paper on Environmental Management and Integrated Pollution, which will be developed as a bill before being tabled in Parliament during the current parliamentary session.

The portfolio committee on environmental affairs and tourism will hold joint public hearings at the end of August, and will take into account more than 80 written submissions from non-governmental organisations, business and academic institutions, among others.

Jordan says the "depth of debate on environmental management, its impact on and by humans, its scope of activities, and the extent to which environmental law affects social and economic matters is essential to the challenges of sustainable development".

Jordan himself has come in for flak recently for not acting fast enough on key issues. This week, the parliamentary committee on environmental affairs lambasted the department for not acting on a damning report, handed to the minister 15 months ago, concerning Thor Chemicals, a mercury recycling plant. The plant has regularly featured in news headlines about pollution and poor management.

Key issues (56)

The committee has called on that department as well as those of Health, Labour, and Water Affairs to meet on August 17 to hear suggestions from chemical waste experts on a way to solve the problem.

On a positive note, Jordan's department is paying more attention to the destruction of marine resources. The ministry is creating a new body, Marine Fisheries, which will replace the Sea Fisheries Department in September. This comes in the wake of new initiatives worldwide to protect and develop marine resources.

Star 1/8/98

Kruger Park plan to deal with elephants

(56) ARG 3/8/98

Skukuza – The Kruger National Park has developed new measures to deal with its elephant population after consulting scientists and wildlife experts, conservation development manager Leo Braack said.

He said the park would be divided into six regions, each with its own priorities.

The extreme north and the south-western regions would become botanical reserves, where particular attention would be given to the conservation of unique vegetation.

The remaining 80% of the park would be divided into four zones, two of which would be high elephant impact zones, and two low elephant impact zones.

The boundaries of the zones would be designated according to elephant movement.

In the high impact zones, elephants would be left to multiply and consume vegetation without interference.

In the low impact zones, the elephant population would be reduced by 7% annually by relocating and culling so-called problem animals.

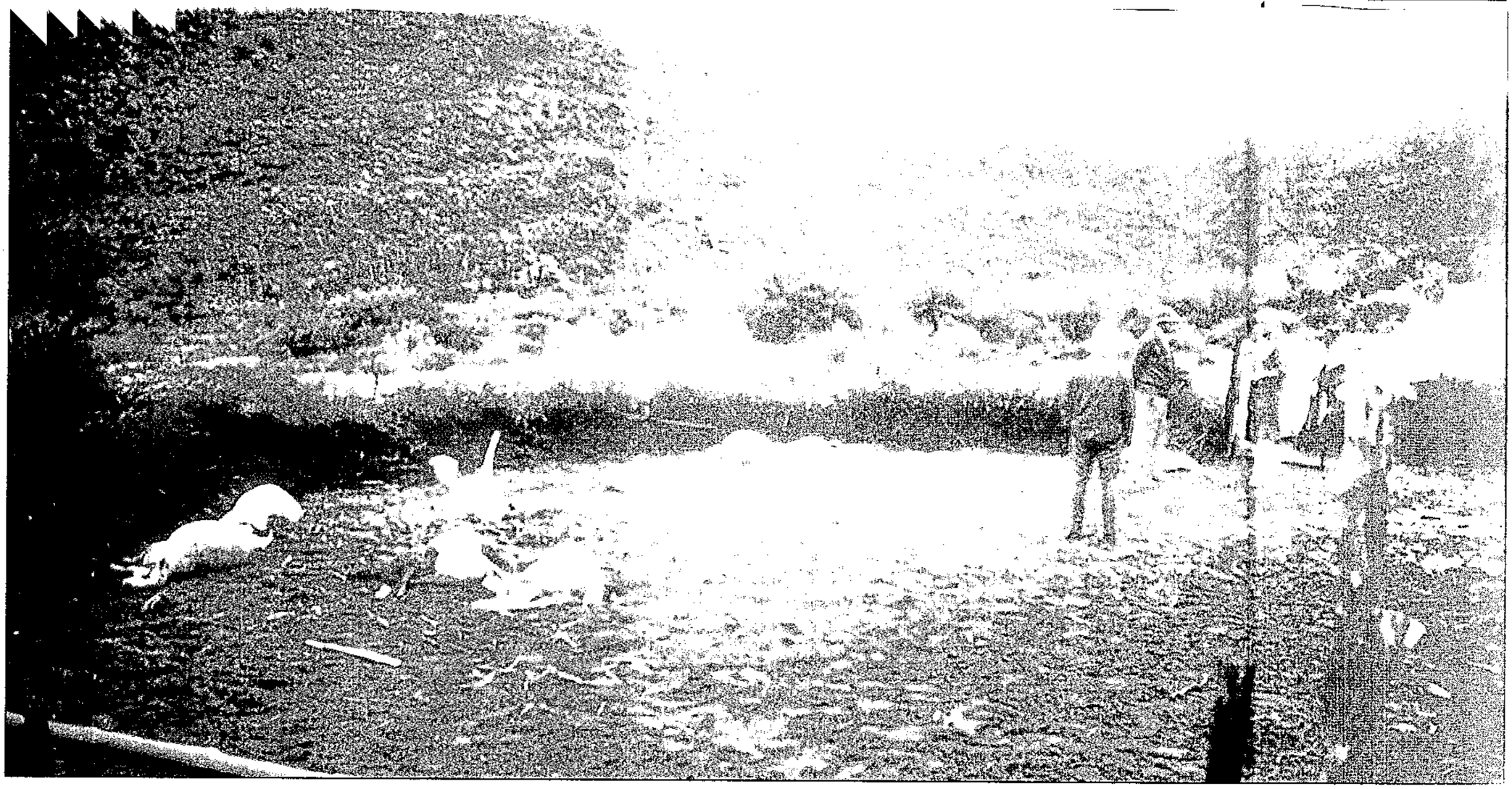
"We reserve the right to use lethal methods as a legitimate tool. Nobody likes this idea, but realities have to be faced," Mr Braack said.

He said the park was not an elephant park only, and elephants were part of a wide bio-diversity which needed to be conserved.

The plan would be carefully monitored, Mr Braack said. If the situation in the high impact region threatened to become irreversible, the zones could be switched.

Referring to bovine tuberculosis among the park's buffalo population, he said the western boundary fence was being reinforced so that there could be little or no contact with neighbouring cattle herds. The buffalo infection was still restricted to the southern parts of the park.

Mr Braack said there was no evidence yet that the disease had spread to the park's rhino population. – Sapa



COLLISION COURSE: Stockfarming in leopard country is a risky undertaking. This farmer near Clanwilliam in the Cederberg lost 16 sheep to a leopard in one night, but the predator fed only one carcass.
PICTURE: CAPE NATURE CONSERVATION

Leopards over lambs

ANDRE MARAIS of the farm Grootrivier in the Kouebokkeveld has given up sheep farming because of leopards. But he is not unhappy about his decision.

"The leopard was here first and this is not really sheep country. We're farming vegetables now, potatoes and onions, and only keep about 70 to 100 sheep for our own use," he said.

Marais' farm falls within the buffer zone of Cape Nature Conservation's leopard conservation programme, where farmers have now accepted that stockfarming here is risky, and that they need to take precautions to protect stock from leopards, or even to rethink the type of farming they do.

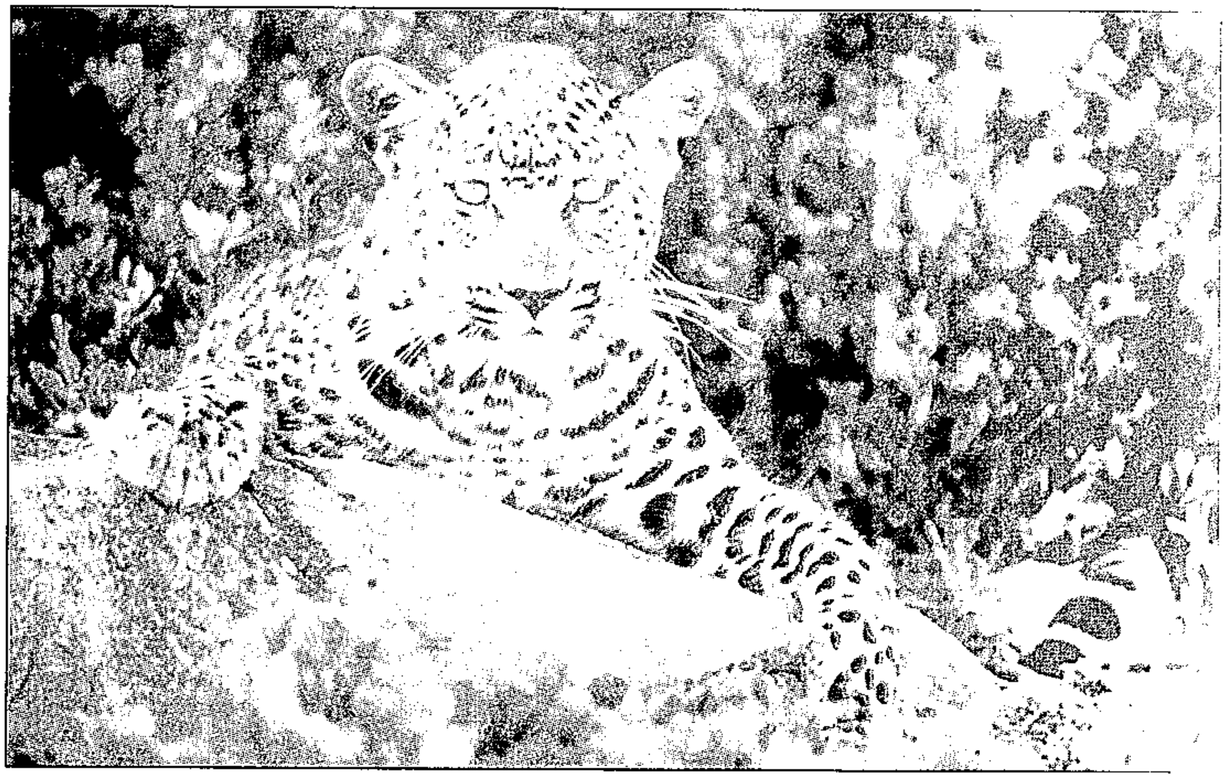
"We used to farm sheep, but we had big problems with leopards, and in the buffer zone we're not allowed to kill them.

"In one instance a leopard killed 18 sheep in one go. They tried to lure it in a cage, but with no success.

"It's too expensive to pay herders to guard stock seven days a week, so we decided to give it up."

Marais' farm is part of the 161 000ha Cedarberg Conservancy, made up of Cape Nature Conservation and private land belonging to 18 owners. The idea is for private landowners to manage their land as an ecological unit and to ensure farming activities are environment-friendly.

Said Marais: "We've got no fences, and landowners are very positive about the leopard programme. We're going to build chalets and move into tourism as well."



HARD TO SPOT: As the human population increases, the habitats of wild animals shrink. Will your grandchildren still be able to see leopards in the wild?
PICTURE: CAPE NATURE CONSERVATION

Farmers' change of heart sees big cats' numbers grow

FOR STOCK farmers, leopards are predators and an enemy, but Cape Nature Conservation's dogged education programme is changing attitudes — and many sheep farmers are learning how to live with the big cats.

(56) CT 3/8/98

FROM the time the first colonists set foot on these shores, the country's big cats have been in trouble.

Rondebosch was one of first places declared a leopard "problem area" back in the time of Simon van der Stel, who paid bounty to people who killed them.

Until the late 1950s leopard were considered vermin and anyone could shoot them.

The country developed, the leopards' habitat shrank and the animals were driven into the mountains — for example the Cederberg and Groot-Winterhoek.

This has led to problems. As a male leopard's territory is 450km^2, some move from the mountains on to farms and prey on sheep and goats, sometimes killing up to 20 at a time.

As a response, Cape Nature Conservation issued permits allowing a farmer to shoot a problem leopard. By the late 1980s, about 25 permits were being issued a year. Many other leopards were probably shot illegally.

Cape Nature Conservation understood the farmers' problems, but it was worried. The leopard is an integral part of the Cape's fynbos system and is at the top of the food chain. If it is removed, the ecological balance would be upset.

The department decided to launch an experimental leopard project in the Cederberg.

In 1988, Jaco van Deventer, now reserve manager of the Groot-Winterhoek wilderness area near Porterville, was appointed to start the first leopard project in the Cederberg as part of Cape Nature Conservation's wider ecological management programme. If the leopard population was healthy, it was probably a sign their ecological management was healthy.

"Our conservation areas are not big enough to sustain a large leopard population, so the leopards' future is in the hands of private landowners," said Van Deventer.

"It is essential to get the co-operation of surrounding landowners to ensure the long-term survival of leopards.

"Initially the response was negative, but now we have good co-operation and farmers call us if there are stock losses and sometimes if they see spoor, just to let us know."

The project established a core area where the killing of leopards — whether by shooting or trapping — was banned. This zone comprises the Cederberg wilderness area (75 000ha), other state land and the Groot-Winterhoek wilderness area (35 000ha).

Land surrounding this was declared a buffer zone. Some parts of this land were owned privately and some were declared mountain catchment areas. Most of it was uncultivated natural veld like fynbos.

Because of our efforts ... leopards are popping up in areas where they used to occur

"It's not economically viable to raise sheep on fynbos, which has a low nutritional value, but some farmers use it for grazing at certain times of the year," said Van Deventer.

"They must accept that stock-farming in the buffer zone is a risk because of leopards. They must take precautions against losses by using herders and putting their stock into a kraal or bringing it down at night."

In the buffer zone, action is weighted in favour of the leopard rather than the farmer. If stock are killed, Cape Nature Conservation may shoot the problem leopard as a last resort.

Outside the buffer zone, if a leopard becomes a stock killer, Cape Nature Conservation will kill it.

However, because of its education programme and the changes in farmers' attitudes, only about four or five permits are issued a year to kill leopards.

Evidence that the programme is succeeding is that signs of leopard have been reported in places where they have not been seen in decades — for example, in the sandveld near Elands Bay.

"Because of our conservation efforts, our conservation areas are saturated — that's why the leopards are popping up in areas where they used to occur historically," Van Deventer said.

"The leopards that cause stock losses in farming areas are animals that have been pushed out by stronger territorial animals."

Cape Nature Conservation is encouraging farmers to form conservancies, in which groups of landowners band together to manage their farms as an ecological unit and adopt practices that will do the least harm to the environment.

"It is a sad thing to do to have to shoot a problem leopard," said Van Deventer.

"They are so magnificent and so seldom seen.

"If we don't kill the problem ones, we will get a negative attitude from farmers towards conservation and leopards. Farmers could start taking the law into their own hands and more leopards would be killed — perhaps not the problem ones.

"We are personally involved in hunting the leopard to make sure the culprit is taken out and not an innocent."

Peninsula National Park chief quits

(56) ARG 5/8/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Top conservationist Brian Huntley has resigned as chairman of the Cape Peninsula National Park advisory committee.

This follows tensions over the role of the committee, which came to a head at the weekend during a closed workshop for committee members.

Professor Huntley, executive director of the National Botanical Institute, informed Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan of his resignation on Monday.

He cited several factors for his resignation, including "continued attacks" on the committee, and on the SA National Parks team responsible for the new park, by certain non-government organisations and even by some of his committee members.

This was despite the "unparalleled

To page 3

CAPE ARGUS, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST

Peninsula Park chief resigns over rows

(56)

From page 1 ARG 5/8/98

success" of establishing the park through land transfers and achieving international funding, Professor Huntley said.

He did not name the NGOs or committee members involved.

He also cited disagreement among members of his advisory committee over the interpretation of their terms of reference – as set out by Dr Jordan and their role and responsibilities.

"Having devoted very considerable energy to the work of the 'Huntley Committee', the recommendations of which led directly to the establishment of the Cape Peninsula National Park, and having given my unqualified support to the (advisory) committee and to the SA National Parks team, I am greatly disappointed by the current turn of events."

He told the Cape Argus today he had failed to get consensus from the committee and he felt there had been too much in-fighting about trivia while the main conservation issues facing the park – such as efforts to get the Oudekraal and Safcol land incorporated – remained unresolved.

"It's such a pity because things are ready to move, and the money is there. I feel time is running out," said Professor Huntley.

"We do need to achieve consensus and get on with conservation matters, and I wish the committee well."

Acting chairman Lester Coelen said it was "regrettable" Professor Huntley had resigned, as he had "an enormous depth" of expertise and experience". He could understand his frustration.

Mr Coelen said he was arranging a new workshop at which the committee would "thrash out all the divergent interpretations" of its role and terms of reference.

"Once we've settled this as best as possible among ourselves – even if it means bringing a minority opinion – we will go to a public workshop.

"We all have a desire to see this park become a success, and there has been too much destructive criticism."

Wildfire expert sounds alarm

Neglect spells more big blazes, S Cape warned

(56) ARG 5/8/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Another big fire in the southern Cape is "just waiting to happen" and politicians must take responsibility for reducing the huge threat that has been allowed to develop, warns a wildfire specialist.

Neels de Ronde of Bredasdorp was commenting after eight fires raged along the Outeniqua mountain range at the weekend, causing mass evacuations and destroying at least seven homes.

"I see that the Southern Cape is ablaze again. This is a very sad situation that could have been avoided," said Dr De Ronde.

Fire protection practices in the region had been neglected in recent years, he charged.

"There has been less and less prescribed burning and less fuel management."

Previously, the state-owned forestry company Safcol and Cape Nature Conservation had done significant block burning. Now, burning was mostly through natural fires, he said.

Dr De Ronde acknowledged that budget and staff cuts were the main reasons for the reduced number of controlled burns.

But the end result was a steady build-up of natural fuel.

"No one is evaluating or measuring the fire hazard. Everyone's just sitting around ..."

And increasing urban development encroaching into natural areas had created a serious fire risk.

Fire protection in the Tsitsikamma area had been neglected in recent years and there was a fuel accumulation problem in the region as a whole.

"It's just waiting for the next fire and for houses to burn.

"I've been proposing for a long time an integrated fire protection approach on a regional scale, but I've been fighting a lonely battle.

"I want to challenge the authorities while something can be done about it. The Government should take responsibility for a fuel management strategy for the region.

"The initiative must come from the authorities, and then the others – like the agricultural sector – can join in."

Wildlife body 'regrets' Huntley's resignation

ARG 6/8/98 (56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The Wildlife Society has expressed regret over the resignation of top conservationist Brian Huntley from the Cape Peninsula National Park advisory committee – but says it is "heartened" that the public will be involved in future discussions with the committee.

The society has been among the strongest critics of the way the committee operated under Professor Huntley.

Western Cape regional manager of the society Andy Gubb said yesterday it was common knowledge that they had voiced concerns about the functioning of the committee which was appointed by Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan.

But it had learned of Professor Huntley's resignation as chairman and as a member "with regret".

"We reaffirm our support for the critical role of the advisory committee, being a democratically-appointed and duly-elected local body responsible for guiding, instructing and monitoring the activities of South Africa's national parks as custodian of our park," said Mr Gubb.

The Wildlife Society believed it could play a constructive role in attempts to find consensus on what the role and responsibility of the advisory committee should be.

Key questions included:

- Was the committee an advisory or controlling body?
- If it was solely advisory, who controlled the park – Cape Town or Pretoria?
- Who would assume final responsibility – the advisory committee or SA National Parks?
- Who would communicate with the public?

Mr Gubb said members of the advisory committee had to believe in democracy and public participation – and be sensitive to the views of Capetonians.

Increasing development in Africa puts raptor species under threat

Star 6/8/98 (56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Most raptor species are coming under increasing threat due to developments on the African continent.

Although there are efforts to conserve and protect the birds in certain parts of the continent, scientists and conservationists have been left in the dark as to the status of raptors in many African countries.

According to Dr Richard Watson, a research biologist in Africa and Madagascar, who is attending the 5th World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls being held in Johannesburg, raptor conservation is practised only in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Madagascar.

"We really do not know what is happening in the rest of the countries. Our biggest problem is the lack of knowledge.

"If we know what is going on, we can react accordingly," he said.

In Africa, the biggest threat to the birds is increased development, which is encroaching on the habitat of raptors.

According to Watson, migratory birds that spend winter in Africa are decreasing in numbers.

"We are not really certain why. The suspicion is that there is a decline in habitat and prey," he said.

Despite this bleak picture, there seems to be a ray of hope for some of the birds in certain parts of Africa.

According to Dr Gerhard Verdoorn from the Endangered Wildlife Trust Raptor Conservation Fund, raptors are doing "fairly well" in South Africa.

Conservation efforts have led to an increase in certain species, including the Cape vulture as well as bateleur and marshal eagles.

In Madagascar, scientists have come to the rescue of the Madagascar fish eagle, serpent eagle and red owl – species which are considered to be on the critical list.

The Madagascar serpent eagle and red owl, which were though to be extinct because they had not been seen for 60 years, have been rediscovered by researchers, who now suspect that there are several breeding pairs.

There are believed to be between 40 and 50 breeding pairs of Madagascar fish eagles left.

Conservation efforts to save the birds include the conservation of wetland habitats in conjunction with communities as well as "sibling rescue", where a second chick is rescued from a nest before it is killed by its sibling.

MONITOR

A BAROMETER OF GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

MAIL & GUARDIAN
August 7 to 13 1997

(56) M+G 7-13/8/98

Another Thor in the making

Bobby Peek

The survival of the constitutional right to a healthy environment depends on the outcome of an unprecedented battle raging through almost every ministry and department of the government.

The executive branch is debating the fate of the draft National Environmental Management Bill. Will the Bill vindicate the constitutional right to "an environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being"? Or will officers strip it of its vital components, replicating the old conservatism of laissez-faire legislation?

What will the government do to reverse the decades-long trend of Thor Chemicals, toxic waste dumps and poisoned asbestos workers? Recent indications look ominous.

The draft Bill, released for comment on July 1, grew out of an extraordinarily expansive — and expensive — consultation process. A three-year series of public conferences, costing almost R10-million, forged a consensus on environmental policy.

Resulting from this process, a White Paper was drawn up which advocated strong environmental legislation, with almost 100 pages of detailed directives. Instead of following this road map for constitutionally sound, publicly supported legislation, the government has proposed a watered-down compromise Bill.

New environmental legislation faces in today's South Africa a substantial limitation. In many countries, a specialised agency tracks down and punishes polluters. The Environmental Protection Agency in the United States is an example.

But the desire to cut governmental costs requires a frank admission that the government will not do the job. These tasks will fall largely to the private sector.

Early versions of the Bill proposed innovative enforcement tools and meaningful public consultation. For the first time ever, a mandatory advisory council would give public input into environmental policy.

Principles of sustainable development would be binding on all government actions. Private enforcement suits to protect the environment would be insulated from adverse costs orders. Everyone would have access to environmental information.

In sum, the Bill originally fulfilled the White Paper's vision of a powerful set of tools for civil society to safeguard a healthy environment.

Once government officials started consulting among themselves, the Bill was transformed in dramatic ways. Wherever the Bill required that the government "shall" take action, the executive rewriting allows that the action "may" be taken. The mandatory advisory committee was scrapped in favour of the possibility that the government will assemble a "forum" for the public to air its views.

Binding principles have become discretionary guidelines. The iron-clad protection against costs awards, likewise, has devolved to an optional provision. One shudders to think that officials may toss out the right to environmental information, in the hopes that the recently tabled controversial Open Democracy Bill might become law and might adequately deal with environmental information.

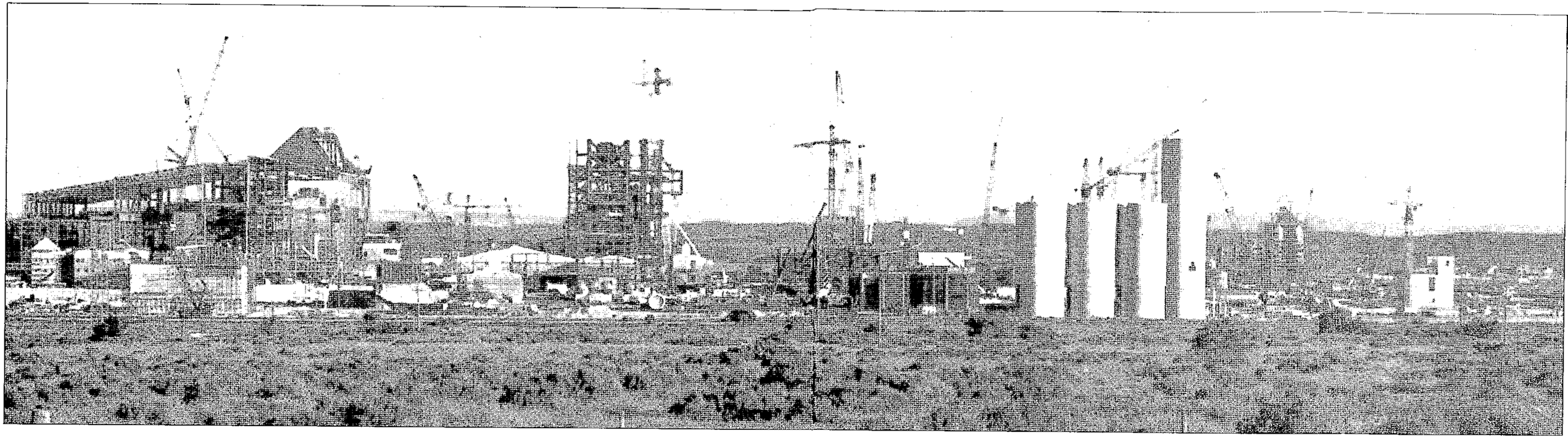
The Bill retains outstanding reforms, like expanding access to courts and allowing enhanced penalties against environmental criminals. These provisions must be strengthened. A step in the right direction is surely better than no step at all.

But neither should we be content to see government officials use a closed-door executive process to undermine the arduous work of public consensus building. If the provisions in the Bill are worth enacting, they should be mandatory, binding and enforceable. If we are serious about having private enforcement of the law, then we must have the tools to act aggressively and with impact.

Quite simply, this government's first foray into the field of environmental legislation needs to be better.

Under the laws inherited from the old regime, Thor Chemicals could import toxic mercury waste in a sham recycling scheme, resulting in the poisoning of workers and the environment. The draft environmental Bill could not prevent another Thor Chemicals disaster, it could not ensure that the Thor victims will get redress, and it would not adequately deter future violations of the same kind.

Bobby Peek is the community campaigns co-ordinator for the Environmental Justice Networking Forum



SALDANHA STEEL: 'the bill should be strengthened to provide for impact assessments at scales broader than individual projects, including entire industrial complexes'

Can the Government afford the environmental impact assessments required by a new law, asks Jean le May

(56) ARG 8/8/98

Well-meaning 'green tape' could trip up South African developers

Anyone who has tried to develop land knows how bad the red tape can be – but soon they will also have to deal with "green tape" imposed by a tough new environmental law.

South Africa's proposed "green law", the draft National Environmental Management Bill, could lead to further delays in getting building projects approved. The central Government apparently does not have sufficient funds to administer the mandatory environmental impact assessments (EIAs) required in terms of the proposed law.

Delays in passing building plans in the Western Cape are already costing developers millions of rands. In a survey for the South African Property Owners' Association, business efficiency expert Wendy Hartshorne said there were unacceptable delays of up to five months in some municipalities, instead of the maximum of 30 days required by law.

In some cases, it took a year for plans requiring special attention to get the nod, she said.

Most people interviewed by Saturday Argus welcomed the draft environment bill.

However, Cas Hamman, director of Cape Nature Conservation, said that funding for provincial governments was extremely limited and that, consequently, environmental administration had a "low priority level".

Only two people in his administration were qualified to decide whether EIAs offered by developers met the legal requirements, he said.

Unless the central Government provided additional funds to hire more staff, delays would be even longer than at present, he said.

Dr Hamman said in a submission to the Department of Environmental Affairs that "most developers would prefer to pay a fee rather than be subjected to such long delays".

The bill should allow provinces to levy fees for duties that had been delegated to them, he said, adding that this was "even more critical when delegating administration of EIA regulations to local authorities, because local authorities were protected in the Local Government Transition Act from the delegation of functions without the provision of adequate funding".

Dr Hamman said the power given to ministers to make regulations about EIAs could lead to a conflict of interest.

"Environmental legislation is excessively fragmented," he said.

"The plethora of legislation will make coherent administration impossible and result in total confusion. Compliance and enforcement may be severely disabled in such a legislative quagmire."

Dr Hamman said he deplored the fact that nothing in the draft bill protected sensitive natural environments. He said the bill should be strengthened to take into account the impact of plans leading to "densification", and to allow impact assessments to be carried out on scales broader than individual projects, including entire industrial complexes (such as the Saldanha developments), he said.

Piet Claasen, senior lecturer in town and regional planning at Stellenbosch University, said the draft bill should have done more to eliminate the duplication of systems.

He said public participation in planning and conservation processes required by the bill was "well established and accepted".

However, he warned against extremes in public participation, which should be avoided "at all costs". On the one hand, the authorities should provide enough opportunity for public input, but, on the other hand, it should avoid "an ill-defined process that drags on for an unlimited time".

Public participation must be cost-effective, he said.

Dr Claasen said small projects that would have minimal impact on the natural environment should not have to be subjected to the same drawn-out scrutinising processes necessary for projects that would clearly have a substantial impact. There should be a quick ratification process for small projects, he said.

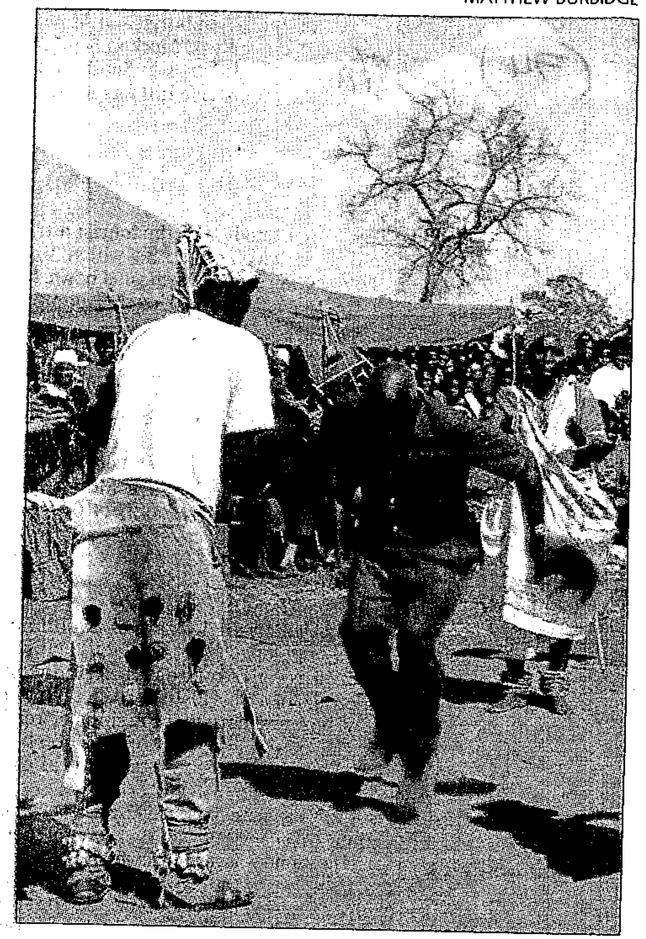
Llewellyn van Wyk, of the Cape Metropolitan Council's environmental and planning committee, said there were "serious reservations" about procedures laid down in the regulations.

It seemed that the bill required a full EIA for every project, however small. "Apart from the additional financial burden of having EIAs done, in some of the smaller municipalities this is likely to be ignored altogether, making nonsense of the law," he said.

Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan said last week that the bill's main purpose was to bring cohesion to the highly fragmented management of the environment.

The core concept was sustainable management of the environment, dispersed at national level among various Government departments and also between the three tiers of government, he said. "We are not trying to raise anyone's costs and we are not anti-development. One of the big problems with industrialised countries is that we have always minimised the environmental costs, which become social costs in the end."

MATTHEW BURBIDGE



Happy days are here again ... dancers in a kraal at the signing ceremony overseen by Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom.

Partnership a bounty for Kruger Park

(56) Star 10/8/98

Tribe has its ancient land back, and conservation will hopefully be a winner, writes **Matthew Burbidge**

The Makuleke burial ground is a shady place, under high trees, but there are no flowers, gravestones or neatly clipped grass. Some of us took a step backward out of a trench when we realised it was the grave of one of the three chiefs buried there.

Community leader Livingstone Maluleke said they had set wooden stakes into concrete to mark the graves, but the elephants always uprooted them.

When the Makuleke were allowed back into the cemetery, old woman set out beer, rekindling ceremonies that had not been performed for decades.

Judges sat under the tree and held court

The chief's kraal was built on the shoulder of a gentle hill, around the roots of a huge baobab tree. Two-hundred families lived here, but for a fragment of fired clay and faint lines of stones, their presence has been erased. Almost erased; the word Maluleke is carved thickly into the base of the tree.

Judges used to sit under this tree and hold tribal court. Deku, an old, tired woman, once lay down to die under the branches and her name is still mentioned as the one to whom transgressors have to pay their fines.

Seven-year-old Livingstone was home for the September holidays in 1969, when "the trucks" arrived. Everyone was loaded in and those that were a little slow were threatened with being shot, or, if they preferred, a member of their family. All the homes and possessions that were left behind were burnt. The government, in a brazen act of insensitivity, declared the Makuleke and their neighbours, the Muteles, could not live together.

The Shangaans were moved to Ntlhaveni, near Giyani, and the Vendas were moved to Bende Mutale in Venda.

The fertile Pafuri area was now integrated into the park, and there was nothing anyone could do about it. Until almost 30 years later, and the Makuleke land claim.

Land restitution, as one land affairs official put it, is the crunch issue in South African governance. It is one of the most fundamental acts this Government can perform to address transformation in this society, and perhaps the most pressing.

The Makuleke and their consultants are to be congratulated for their pragmatism and patience in negotiating the settlement.

The SA Parks Board first response was to consolidate Makuleke interests with those of their neighbouring communities in a development in the nearby Makuya Park, with limited traversing rights inside the Pafuri.

Others felt the claim was greedy, and that the Makuleke could not be trusted with such a precious resource.

By the time the community had the support and funding from conservation NGOs like the Wildlife and Environment Society behind them, the new parks board CEO had been appointed.

A committee was also formed to rethink the park's land claims policy, and so, gradually, the outlines of the deal were worked out.

The complex agreement guarantees the Makuleke Communal Property Association, on behalf of 2 570 families, active participation and the responsibility of ownership, while the state has the power to enforce responsible conservation practices.

Predictably, not everyone is happy. Dark mutterings about conservation not being worth the paper it is written on, can still be heard.

Some of the game rangers can barely disguise their contempt about the restitution of the Makuleke. These rangers are scared; scared of change and rightly scared of losing their jobs.

Durkje Gilfillan, land claims commissioner for the Northern Province, said the rights to ownership of land could be determined by the ecological sensitivity and conservational importance of the claim.

The state retains the mineral rights

This could vary from nature reserve to nature reserve, and in a particular reserve itself. The Makuleke can build a lodge on their land; others' rights will perhaps be limited to collecting herbs, performing cultural activities or organising game drives.

Significantly, the state has retained mineral rights to the land, but, if they decide to sell, they are obliged to offer it to the communal association first.

The Makuleke and Matule must have felt they were walking on enchanted ground at the signing ceremony in Ntlhaveni in May.

In his congratulatory speech Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom said the conservation area would now be more secure because the park and the Makuleke both had a real stake in its success.

After the ceremony, Hanekom was being interviewed by a television crew, and due to sound problems, was asked again and again to repeat his first response to a question.

And far from trite, his response sounded more and more convincing with its retelling.

"I have a dream for the park and this claim will enhance its value. Visitors will have a much richer experience after meeting the Makuleke.

"This claim sets a tone, a precedent; for the Parks Board becoming a helpful partner in future claims."

The Star ... Friday August 14 1998

Anger over Matola toxic waste plan

Star 14/8/98 (56)

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Residents of the Matola community in Mozambique have not been informed of intentions by the Danish and Mozambican government to incinerate toxic waste in a cement kiln in the town.

Mayor designate of the town, Carlos Filipe Tembe, told The Star that they had not been aware of these plans until the weekend when representatives of the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (ENJF) and two experts on incineration visited the town.

Tembe said: "We are very concerned. The first thing we have to do is find out from our government what is going to happen. We will also have to see why they are bringing it (the pesticides) to us."

South African company EnviroServ has been contracted to do a six-month cleanup of hundreds of tons of chemicals and pesticides in storage in Mozambique.

The ENJF, Greenpeace International and the Basel Action Network have attacked the proposal to burn the waste in a cement kiln as it could create dangerous cancer-causing compounds.

There is growing international outrage at the proposal as it is also feared that the establishment of an incineration facility will attract waste imports to the region.

Dr Paul Connett, an incinerator expert who visited Matola over the weekend, has indicated that there are many shortcomings in the environmental impact study done by the Danish Development Agency (Danida) on the incineration proposal.

"I'm appalled at the superficiality of the Danida environmental impact study. The study barely mentioned the extremely toxic pollution from incineration or the feasibility of non-incineration treatment," he said.

The international environmental groups alliance has called on the Danish government to halt the project, pending a thorough review of all options in consultation with the Matola community.

The alliance has learned that Danida is using the Mozambican example to propose similar incineration in India and has challenged the Danish government to a public debate.

Gauteng 'forming pollution strategy'

Josey Ballenger

GAUTENG was developing a strategy to assume greater responsibility for air pollution matters, but the responsibility for regulating the atmosphere rested with the national environmental affairs department, MEC Nomvula Mokonyane said at the weekend. BD 11/8/98

In a written response to questions posed by Democratic Party Gauteng leader Peter Leon, Mokonyane said the agriculture, conservation and environment department would eventually assume direct responsibility. However, in terms of the Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act of 1965, the responsibility lay with the department's chief air pollution control officer.

Confirming this, spokesman Jay Singh said the department was also devising a regulatory framework on acceptable pollution levels in order to beef up the legislation. It was also developing a database for demographic information on pollution.

Leon said he found it "absolutely unbelievable" that Mokonyane's department did not know winter atmospheric pollution or ozone levels; what monitoring programmes were in place to measure lead levels in children; or the incidence of respiratory disease caused by pollution.

Jordan stands up for Kirstenbosch

Disputed plans in public arena for years, he says

(56) ARG 12/8/98

Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan has moved to damp controversy about the Kirstenbosch development programme.

The approach of siting new buildings on the periphery of the garden dated back to a 1973 development study, which had been approved at successive meetings of the National Botanical Institute Board, he said.

Replying to questions in the National Council of Provinces by Rosier de Ville of the Freedom Front, Dr Jordan said the 1973 approach had

CLIVE SAWYER

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

been confirmed by a report commissioned and approved by the Department of Public Works and Land Affairs in 1980.

The local community, through the Botanical Society, had funded the 1973 report and had been involved in the opinion survey and discussions on the report's recommendations.

Compilers of the 1980 report had done further public consultations and had held public participation meetings in November 1984.

Dr Jordan said that the Kirstenbosch development programme had been presented on permanent display boards at the two entrances to the garden.

Regular public briefings on developments had been held, the most recent being in October and December last year and last month. Further meetings were planned for August 27 and October 14.

Members of the public and the private sector had contributed more than R20-million to developments in Kirstenbosch over the past five years and continued to donate money in support of the programme.

Dr Jordan said public consultation through regular meetings, press releases, and articles in popular magazines was "continuous and ongoing".

The lead time for projects was protracted and deadlines for comment had never been imposed.

Decisions on individual projects were taken by the NBI board.

Copies of regular opinion surveys, needs assessments and visitor profiles were available for scrutiny at the Molteno library in Kirstenbosch.

Dr Jordan said some people who had not followed the various media and other announcements about the Kirstenbosch development programme had "expressed surprise at developments which they perceived as "new".

Learning about a natural-born thriller

The Wednesday Interview

CT 12/8/98 (56)

***FARIEDA KHAN** believes apartheid deprived blacks of a natural environment — and she's doing something about that. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.*

WHILE most of the members of the green movement are drawn from the more affluent groups who live in the country's leafy suburbs, professional environmentalist Farieda Khan was born and bred — and still lives — in the semi-industrial, polluted Salt River.

And she loves it.

"Many people find it strange that an environmentalist comes from an inner city environment which is full of factories and pollution, where most people don't have gardens and where there is very little green space.

"But I think it is precisely because I come from that background that I feel the need very strongly to develop environments which are attractive to live in. It is also why I am more of an urban environmentalist than a straight science-wildlife type."

Khan lives in a terraced house in Salt River ("You'll find it easily — the only one with a garden") which has been in her family since late last century.

While she acknowledges the suburb is bleak, she loves its social richness.

"I love Salt River with a passion. There is a community here, which many other places have lost, or never had. Everyone knows each other, and there is a warm, friendly atmosphere. I know the man who put up my burglar bars, and the mechanic at the local garage, and the woman I buy koeksusters from.

"You'll see housewives going to the shops in their dressing gowns, walking past factory workers who don't bat an eyelid."

She grew up in the shadow of Table Mountain, and feels an almost physical attachment to it.

"Sometimes I think I'm hooked up to the mountain by an invisible umbilical cord. When we were children, we really could get into the natural environment quite easily. There was a gate behind Groote Schuur which we went through, and walked up Devil's Peak. I also remember playing on Woodstock beach across the railway line. Now it has all gone. The gate is closed off and the beach has been turned into a concrete harbour.

"This is an example of the short-sightedness of city planners. Salt River could have been an environmentally desirable suburb, but because it was cut off by man-made obstacles, it has become a bleak, inner city place where, if you don't have a car, you might as well be living miles from the sea and mountain."

Planners, says Khan, don't plan for people. They plan for commercial interests, or for cars, or for industry.

"I always make a point to argue for holism. People are too biased towards science and technology, and neglect social and political factors. I always try to put those two factors back into the equation, because it is a very neglected side of the environmental sphere."

It was when she went to high school in the 1960s that Khan became politicised. It was the 1960s. Her teachers featured anti-apartheid activists like Neville Alexander.

"I arrived a naive 13-year-old and overnight was thrown into a maelstrom of political activism. Our teachers gave us a political awareness and also a sense of worth. We were told by our teachers to stand on our hind legs and stand proud.

"But we weren't indoctrinated. They taught us to think, gave us the tools to be critical. And education was always a priority. It was 'liberation with education' and if we lost out on school work because of political activities, we made up that time.

"Later when I was teaching on the Flats in the '70s, things had changed. The political activism was pupil-driven, no longer teacher-driven, and it had changed to 'liberation before education'. I don't believe in that. I passionately believe you need education with liberation."

Apartheid legislation kept blacks and whites at separate universities, unless they wanted to do a course that was not offered at their allotted university. Because she did Social Anthropology and Xhosa, Khan was allowed by the authorities to attend UCT, where she did a BA degree and then Honours in History.

"I never intended to teach, but like so many other blacks, I'm afraid to say, we drifted into teaching because of the lack of opportunities for us."

URBAN DECAY: Environmentalist Farieda Khan at one of the few green spots in Salt River. She says bad planning has turned it into a decaying inner city area. She believes that mainstream conservation organisations have a lot to answer for by excluding blacks during the apartheid era, and says the environment has suffered as a result.

PICTURE: GARTH STEAD

At Crestway Senior Secondary in Retreat and at Bridgetown Senior Secondary she came across an environment a lot worse that anything she had experienced in her childhood. She also came across gangsterism, and people she couldn't reason with. In this emotionally and physically bleak spot, she decided to start a hiking club to introduce children to the natural environment, which was so near yet so far from them.

It wasn't easy. Most were just not interested, and those that were said: "But miss, what will we do when we get to the top of the mountain?"

But for most of those who joined Khan, a wonderful world opened up to them, and to this day some of her former pupils are hooked on hiking and are keen environmentalists.

"You're not born an environmentalist, you are made one through experience. Apartheid closed most resorts and nature areas to blacks, setting aside some hideous commercialised picnic places with shops and blaring music.

"I remember going to Bain's Kloof to a picnic facility for coloureds. Hideous. Nowhere near the river, no trails, postage stamp swimming pool, while just down the road was the white facility in beautiful natural surroundings, next to the river, hiking trails laid out, natural swimming pools. To me that encapsulated the apartheid era in terms of conservation.

"The mainstream conservation fraternity, the NGOs, the provincial and state authorities have a helluva lot to answer for. They estranged black South Africans from the natural environment, prevented them from enjoying it.

"That has had two consequences: It damaged the psyche of black South Africans, and has meant that the environmental movement has never had mass support.

"The environment has lost out too. People moan that the former homelands have been raped, which is true. But it was apartheid policy that squashed millions into fragments of our country, forcing them to live unsustainably, and leaving sections of our country environmentally bankrupt."

What changes would she like to see in the environmental sphere?

"A lot of mainstream environmental organisations are starting to change, but they need to step it up. They need to harness people's energy in trying to improve their environments, to make initiatives more community based, and to find ways of empowering people so they can sustain these initiatives.

"Townships lack the money and the expertise to do it themselves.

"The environmental movement in South Africa is still not mass-based, and to get there we need a type of environmental affirmative action."

Teaching about the local green scene

FARIEDA KHAN is the projects director of UCT's Environmental Advisory Unit, which was founded in 1992 to provide disadvantaged groups with environmental research and advice.

Important functions of the unit are to increase environmental literacy by providing information in a simple form, and to facilitate public participation in environmental decision-making.

A trained school teacher, Khan became a professional environmentalist after she completed a master's degree at UCT's Environmental and Geographical Department.

Her contract with the unit ends this year, and she has been offered a doctoral research fellowship at the Environmental and Geographical Department from next year.

Her research will focus on conservation history in South Africa from 1910 to the end of the apartheid era, "looking behind the mainstream environmental movements", and putting them into political context.

Khan serves on the board of the South African National Parks and on the Cape Peninsula National Park Committee.

She has written several articles on the environment for various publications, and also several short stories.

Environment bill heralds a tougher era for business

BD 17/8/98 (56)

Josey Ballenger

BUSINESS in SA had "had it easy" when it came to environmental laws, but the National Environmental Management Bill would mark the start of a new and tougher era, Environment and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan said.

"SA business has never demonstrated any corporate responsibility when it comes to the environment. Given the free ride they've had for so long, it takes 'chutzpah' (for them to complain about the bill)," Jordan said.

He said the bill was "not as hard-hitting as it could be", because it had to accommodate different, and sometimes conflicting, interests.

Although business and environmentalists had objected to the latest draft as being either too strict or too soft respectively, the bill had "to strike some sort of balance".

Business should embrace best environmental practices now, rather than "have them imposed in a few years" by the global marketplace.

However, legislation had to be careful not to force business to "march too far ahead".

One significant change from the draft gazetted on July 1, was the removal of a proposed commission for sustainable development, which Jordan said might instead be established by the president's office.

"Sustainable development is not a purely environmental function. The president's office will oversee everyone. Otherwise, environmental affairs would be a 'nosy parker'...".

The bill made it clear the department was the lead government agent in environmental management and it would also impose harsher punitive measures for polluters and force them to reimburse winning parties for their legal expenses.

Despite criticism that the bill added to, rather than consolidated, the existing state of fragmented law, Jordan insisted the bill would "supersede" and "bring under one roof" all environmental legislation.

Laurraine Lötter, executive director of the Chemical and Allied Industries' Association, however, attacked the bill for "not (being) a framework in the sense of covering all environmental aspects".

Jordan conceded that bills would have to be introduced to address pollution control and some other areas.

Minister defends new bill on environment

BD 14/8/98 (56)

Josey Ballenger

ENVIRONMENTAL Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan defended the National Environmental Management Bill yesterday, saying it would bring about co-ordination and co-operative governance and provide new instruments to enforce compliance with legislation.

Jordan said the environment department hoped to see the bill passed in the current parliamentary session.

The National Assembly's and National Council of Provinces' environmental committees would probably hold joint public hearings in the next four weeks.

The cabinet passed the bill two weeks ago after intense negotiations between various government departments, particularly environment, water and minerals and energy.

Speaking at an African National Congress briefing at Albert Luthuli House in Johannesburg yesterday, Jordan said the affected departments had worked "tirelessly" to consider the implications of the bill, which made his department the lead agency on environmental matters.

"The consensus achieved among (them) bodes well for the (bill's) efficient implementation," he said.

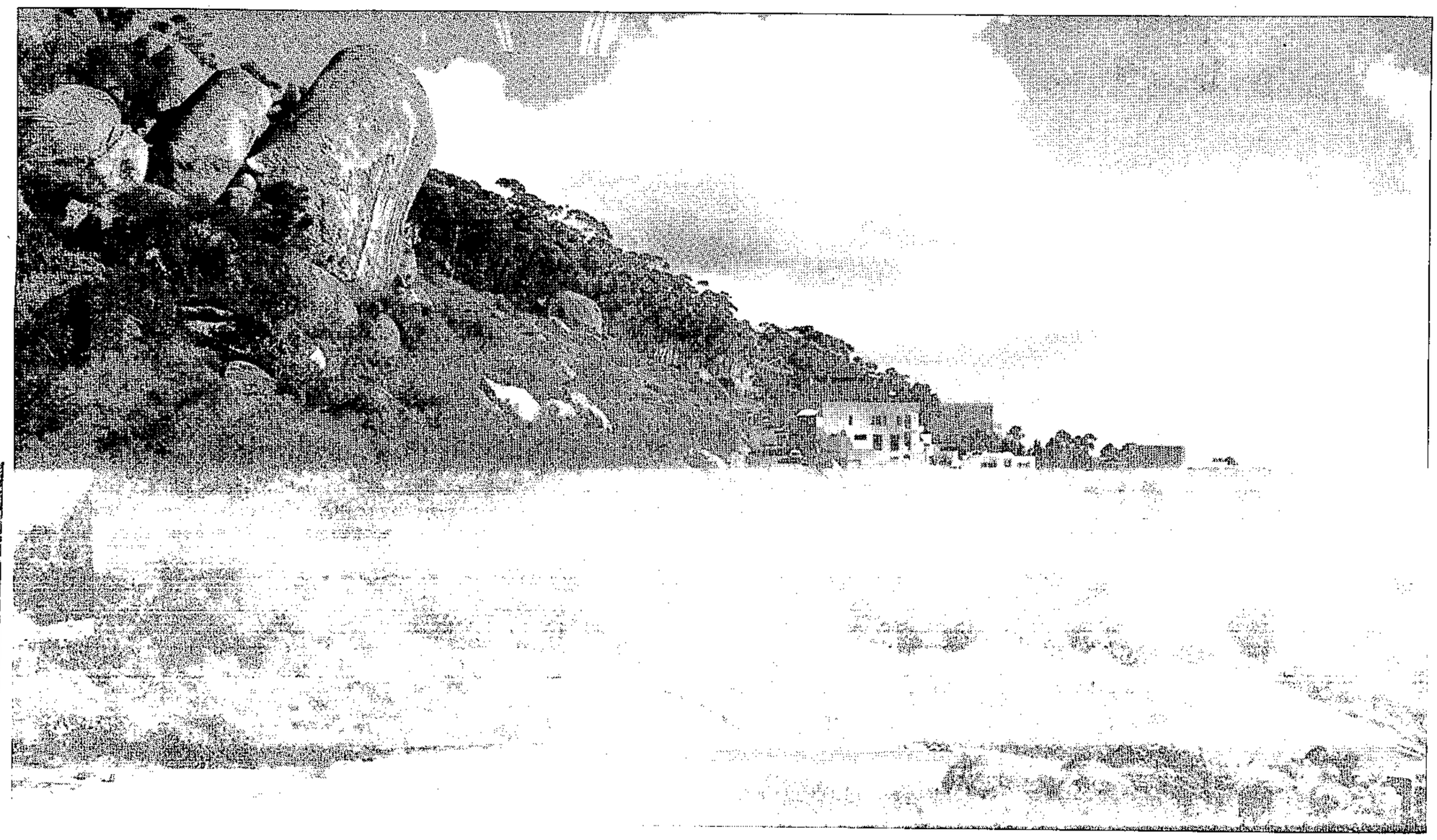
Jordan acknowledged that some parties felt the bill did "too little and sells itself short on regulating integrated environmental management", while others said it went "too far".

Parliament's committees would consider all public comments.

The department's other priorities were finalising the national waste management strategy and developing action plans; implementing a plan to give effect to the recommendations of the commission of inquiry into Thor Chemicals; and developing a fisheries monitoring programme.

An integrated information management system and database on environmental parameters and pollution would also be introduced.

The department also planned to publish a green paper on coastal management by the end of the month and a draft white paper early next year.



GETTING HIGH: residents face a greater threat from natural disasters as houses are built higher on the Peninsula's mountains Picture: HANNES THIART

The thrills and spills of living on the edge

Mountainside property owners find it's tough at the top

(56) ARG 15/8/98

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WARING

The view may be great from those mountainside houses around Cape Town, but the living is dangerous.

With houses being built higher and higher up the Peninsula's mountains, residents face natural disasters such as fire, rockfalls, mudslides – and invading baboons.

The SA National Parks, which now controls the entire Cape Peninsula National Park, wants residents to take special measures to minimise damage.

Landowners are using existing property rights granted years ago on mountainside land. But as the view sites get better, the dangers of living there increase.

Some of the residents expect the authorities to prevent damage to their homes – but parks officials want the mountainside residents to take responsibility for their own safety.

City councillor Chris Joubert, who has lived for years on the slopes of Signal Hill above Sea Point, recalled how last year he had 10 minutes to vacate his house as a fire fanned by high winds swept across the slopes.

Mr Joubert said that, living as he did on the boundary of the nature reserve, the fear of fire was always great.

He said the huge granite rocks balanced precariously above the houses were also a cause of concern.

Access to his property and others on the boundary was gained via narrow roads, which were difficult for fire engines to negotiate.

In addition, he said, water was not easily accessible.

"During the last fire, after getting out of my house, I had to squeeze past fire engines blocking the road," said Mr Joubert.

He said residents on the boundary had written to the Cape Town city council asking it to take heed of the concerns of residents on Lion's Head and Signal Hill who were vulnerable to natural disasters.

Experts are calling for regulations to be imposed on people building on the boundaries of nature reserves to minimise damage to the environment and the landowners.

James Jackelman of Cape Peninsula National Park said more houses were being built on the boundaries of the nature reserve. The environment around construction sites was virtually being destroyed.

He said the challenge was to come up with environmentally- friendly strategies which would benefit landowners as well as the environment.

He said guidelines could be introduced to regulate building. An informal forum could be developed in which landowners, insurance company representatives and local authorities could seek solutions to the risks faced by those building on nature reserve boundaries.

"Landowners can contribute in terms of the design of their houses."

Mr Jackelman said precautions to minimise fire risks could include planting gardens with indigenous plants and keeping gutters clean.

"Baboons are a nuisance in the South Peninsula, where residents are quick to call on local authorities to remove 'their' baboons," he said.

Mr Jackelman told Saturday Argus there were ways in which residents could make their properties less baboon-friendly; for example, by ensuring rubbish was kept in locked bins, and by not feeding them.

Thor faces closure of Cato Ridge plant

BD 18/8/98 (56)

David Greybe

CAPE TOWN — Thor Chemicals faces possible closure of its KwaZulu-Natal plant if a parliamentary investigation finds unacceptable levels of mercury toxicity at the plant.

The environmental affairs and tourism portfolio committee yesterday set up an urgent investigation after "losing patience" with Thor and the environmental affairs and tourism department for the long delay in resolving problems caused by leakage of mercury-containing waste from storage drums and resultant soil contamination over years.

The task team must report back to Parliament on August 31 on the situation — particularly that of the containment of waste — at Thor's mercury recycling operations at its plant in Cato Ridge.

The committee also called on the health department to appoint an independent team of doctors, with international assistance if necessary, "to assess the medical condition of workers at Thor — past and present — as well as the community".

Critics of Thor claim the leakage of mercury due to inadequate storage has contaminated the soil which, in turn, has contaminated the water supply in the area.

Committee chairman Gwen Mahlangu said if the soil was found to be contaminated, operations might be suspended. "We need to be pro-active and not wait for things to happen."

The task team will include representatives of the departments of environmental affairs and tourism, water affairs and forestry, health and labour, as well as unions and chemical waste experts and it must liaise with Thor. Mahlangu said she would meet with the four relevant ministers to seek their "maximum co-operation".

The task team will also "monitor" the long overdue establishment of a technical team by the environmental affairs and tourism department to study longer term solutions at Thor.

Thor refused to attend yesterday's committee meeting because, it said, "we do not believe that any good purpose will be served by our attending".

Thor cited a lack of progress by government in implementing the recommendations of an independent inquiry 15 months ago into Thor.

Mahlangu said the committee would write to Thor and point out that the company was constitutionally bound to attend a meeting in Parliament if called to do so.

The inquiry reported to Environment and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan in May last year that the waste situation at Thor was "out of control". It said there was an estimated 3 300 tons of chemical waste in various forms from SA and abroad at the plant.

The only viable option was "to treat the mercury waste in an environmentally friendly manner by recycling via incineration or roasting".

However international incineration critic Paul Connett yesterday called on the committee to consider a 10-year moratorium on the building of solid waste incinerators in SA so as to allow for the study of other options. Incineration was dangerous and no longer internationally "fashionable".

Heath appeals on powers for Transkei evictions case

(56)

BD 18/8/98

BLOEMFONTEIN — Judge Willem Heath's special investigation unit has received leave from the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein to appeal to it in regard to the unit's jurisdictional powers and functions and whether it has any inherent jurisdiction like that possessed by the high court.

The question arose in connection with developments in regard to the occupation of cottages, by Simon Nicholas Konyn and 72 others, on state land on the former Transkei's coastal strip.

The unit instituted proceedings before a special tribunal established in terms of the Special Investigating Units and Special Tribunal Act of 1996 to seek the eviction of Konyn and the others from the cottages.

The unit is supported in the proceedings by the ministers of environmental affairs and tourism, agriculture and land affairs, and the Eastern Cape's economic affairs and tourism MEC. The unit contends the cottages are unlawfully occupied as they are on state land and the occupants do not have the required authority to occupy them on such land.

Before the first day of the tribunal hearing, Konyn and the others brought an urgent application before the Grahamstown High Court for the notice under which proceedings were instituted to be declared of no force and effect, and to interdict the unit from starting proceedings before the tribunal.

The application was dismissed. The 73 went on to take the matter on appeal to the high court's Transkei arm. It held that all notices to initiate legal proceedings were invalid and of no force and legal effect. The unit was restrained from proceedings before the special tribunal. — Sapa.

Thor 'shows contempt'

(56)

KERRY CULLINAN

CT 18/8/98

THOR CHEMICALS' failure to report to Parliament yesterday on how it was storing spent mercury was "unacceptable" and "showed contempt for the highest office of the land".

So said Gwen Mahlangu, chair of Parliament's portfolio committee on environmental affairs and tourism, after Thor indicated in a letter that it felt no "good purpose" would be served if it attended yesterday's meeting.

The committee had asked Thor for a briefing on what progress the company had made in disposing of mercury waste that it had been storing at its Cato Ridge plant. But Thor's managing director, Barry Longden, said in his letter that the government should be blamed for the delay in dealing with the spent mercury.

According to Longden, despite a presidential commission of inquiry that presented its recommendations in 1997, "no practical steps have been taken to resolve the issue of mercury residues remaining on our site, despite this company's commitment to following the recommendations of the commission".

Mahlangu said she had hoped yesterday's meeting would have resolved how to deal with the waste once and for all, but the company's failure to show up meant that the matter would now "drag on".

MPs also instructed the Department of Health to conduct tests on workers to determine whether they had been contaminated.

US chemistry professor Paul Connett, who briefed the committee on waste disposal, said blood and urine samples were "not enough" as tests had to be run to determine the mercury level in workers' brains.

Twenty workers have already been granted compensation by a British court for disabilities caused by mercury exposure, while a further 21 are seeking compensation. About 23 workers are in daily contact with the waste, estimated at about 3 000 tons. — Parliamentary Bureau

White Paper on pollution ready

Sowetan 18/8/98

By Russel Molefe (56)

THE long-awaited White Paper on Integrated Pollution and Waste Management – a result of extensive discussions and debates with stakeholders – is to be released on Thursday.

The White Paper formed part of a project by both the Environmental Affairs and Tourism and Water Affairs and Forestry ministries, which conducted a number of well-attended workshops during the process of drafting the paper.

The White Paper will now serve as a policy on pollution and waste management issues which have been a problem because of a lack of clarity about them.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism Deputy Minister Mr Peter Mokaba believes reports from the workshops reflect the views of the stakeholders at all levels.

"The comments were put into a database for easy access for the drafting team. This enabled us to account for what happened to every comment and ensured that the White Paper is a reflection of what the stakeholders want to see in the policy.

"The conflicts that were encountered during the drafting process were resolved and it can now be submitted to Parliament," Mokaba said.

Call for probe into Thor waste

(56)

Sowetan 18/8/98

THE National Assembly's environmental affairs committee yesterday called for the immediate appointment of a task team to urgently investigate ways of safely containing over 5 000 tons of highly toxic mercury waste stored at Thor Chemicals' Cato Ridge plant in KwaZulu-Natal.

Containment of the waste, 3 000 tons of which are stored in drums, many of which are leaking, and 2 000 tons of which are in holding dams and causing contamination of the surrounding soil, was a matter of life and death, committee chairman Gwen Mahlangu said.

The committee had "lost patience" with the lengthy process of appointing a technical advisory task team and urgent interim measures were now required to safeguard the health of workers at the chemical plant, she said.

Yesterday's meeting was attended by representatives from the ministries of Environmental Affairs, Labour, Water Affairs and Health, as well as from various unions.

Although scheduled to attend, Thor Chemicals' representatives were not present at the meeting.

Mahlangu said the interim task team, to be appointed after consultation with the relevant ministers, directors-general and ministries, would investigate:

- A method for the immediate containment of the leaking mercury waste drums, as well as contaminated soil in the Cato Ridge plant's storage areas. This should go ahead even if it meant suspending the plant's operations; and
- An independent medical examination of past and present Thor Chemicals employees.

> **"In the circumstances, we do not believe that any good purpose will be served by our attending the proposed meeting"**

The team would report back to the committee with its findings on August 31, and thereafter at weekly intervals until its task was completed.

Mahlangu described Thor Chemicals' failure to attend yesterday's meeting as "unprofessional".

"It is in breach of the Constitution not to come when you are called upon by Parliament to do so."

She explained that late on Friday afternoon, Thor Chemicals' managing director had faxed her a letter in which he had said his company would not be attending Monday's presentation.

The letter stated that newspaper reports after last month's committee meeting on disposal of mercury waste had created the impression "that your portfolio committee, in the person of its chairperson, appeared to hold Thor Chemicals accountable for the lack of progress...".

"In the circumstances, we do not believe that any good purpose will be served by our attending the proposed meeting," the fax said.

Toxic waste incineration expert and Associate Professor of Chemistry at New Yorks' St Lawrence University Dr Paul Connett told the committee that containment of the waste was critical.

Contamination

He warned that incineration was not a viable method for disposing of mercury waste.

High temperatures caused the mercury to vaporise and escape into the atmosphere.

This could result in contamination of the food chain and poisoning of the environment. There was also a possibility that incineration would release other contaminants into the atmosphere. – *Sapa*.

CAPE TIMES
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 1998

TRUST WANTS TO BUILD HOUSES

Fight opens over public land

CT 19/8/98 (56)

THE STATE WANTS to divest itself of the whale lookout point at Plettenberg Bay, and a public battle is already brewing over who gets the land. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THE piece of prime real estate above Lookout Beach, worth millions, has been leased to Plettenberg town council for decades. The council has used it as public open space.

The Department of Public Works now regards the 3,5ha section of coastal land as "redundant" and wants to sell it.

The council applied to get the land at a nominal price and maintain the open space, but Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom and Public Works Minister Jeff Radebe have said they must pay a market-related price.

The council says it cannot afford it.

Public Works would not disclose what price a private evaluator had put on the land, but said "it could be more than R4 million".

Now a controversial group has much of the Plett community up-in-arms with a proposal to buy the land.

The South Coast Education Trust wants to build houses on the Lookout site, and say that they intend to give some of the profits to disadvantaged schools in the area.

The trustees are Michael Ralph and Timothy Stanton from Cape Town, and the trust's agents are Bernard Rens and Mark Friedman of Plett.

Friedman, a South African businessman who has been based in Hong Kong, said he was "at a loss to understand the furore".

"The trust was formed to acquire the land and develop it sensitively with low-density housing and to make a contribution to disadvantaged schools in Plett.

"We're looking at it with a certain amount of altruism. We've had extensive discussions with leading educationalists and schools' governing bodies in disadvantaged areas of Plett and told them certain benefits would accrue to their schools and they were pathetically grateful and very enthusiastic," Friedman said.

He was unable to say how much money they would get, because that depended on "how many plots we can carve from the land", but said it would be several hundreds of thousands of rands.

He said they would leave much of the Lookout site untouched, but that it was not really environmentally sensitive as it had been invaded by alien vegetation and had the Pansy Shell parking lot on it.

In their application, they asked that Public Works keep their bid confidential and not to tell the local council. Trustee Timothy Stanton said the reason for this was to avoid "everything getting out of proportion".

"We didn't want a situation with a lot of people asking a lot of questions. We're businessmen," he said, adding that the trust had not been formally registered because they wanted to see Public Works' reaction to their proposal first.

The Plettenberg Bay Community Environment Forum, made up of 17 local environmental, ratepayers, political, and tourist groups, received a tip-off about the proposal.

They established that there were three beneficiaries of the Education Trust: Bero Trust, Elf Trust and "such schools within the greater Plettenberg Bay area as may be nominated by the trustees within their discretion from time to time".

The forum said in a statement: "It seems as if there is no firm or binding undertaking to give any benefit to any school in the area. Is the Education Trust a ploy to buy the support of the underprivileged communities for a scheme that will mainly benefit a few private developers at the expense of the long-term economic and environment health of Plettenberg Bay?"

Bero and Elf Trusts, also not yet registered, were "for the investors' benefit", Friedman said.

Town clerk Ken Roelofsz said that after the Environmental Forum had alerted them, they met Public Works officials to discuss buying the land.

"It's part of our heritage and it's crazy to think of selling it off for development. Public Works told us we have first refusal, but we simply cannot afford market-related prices.

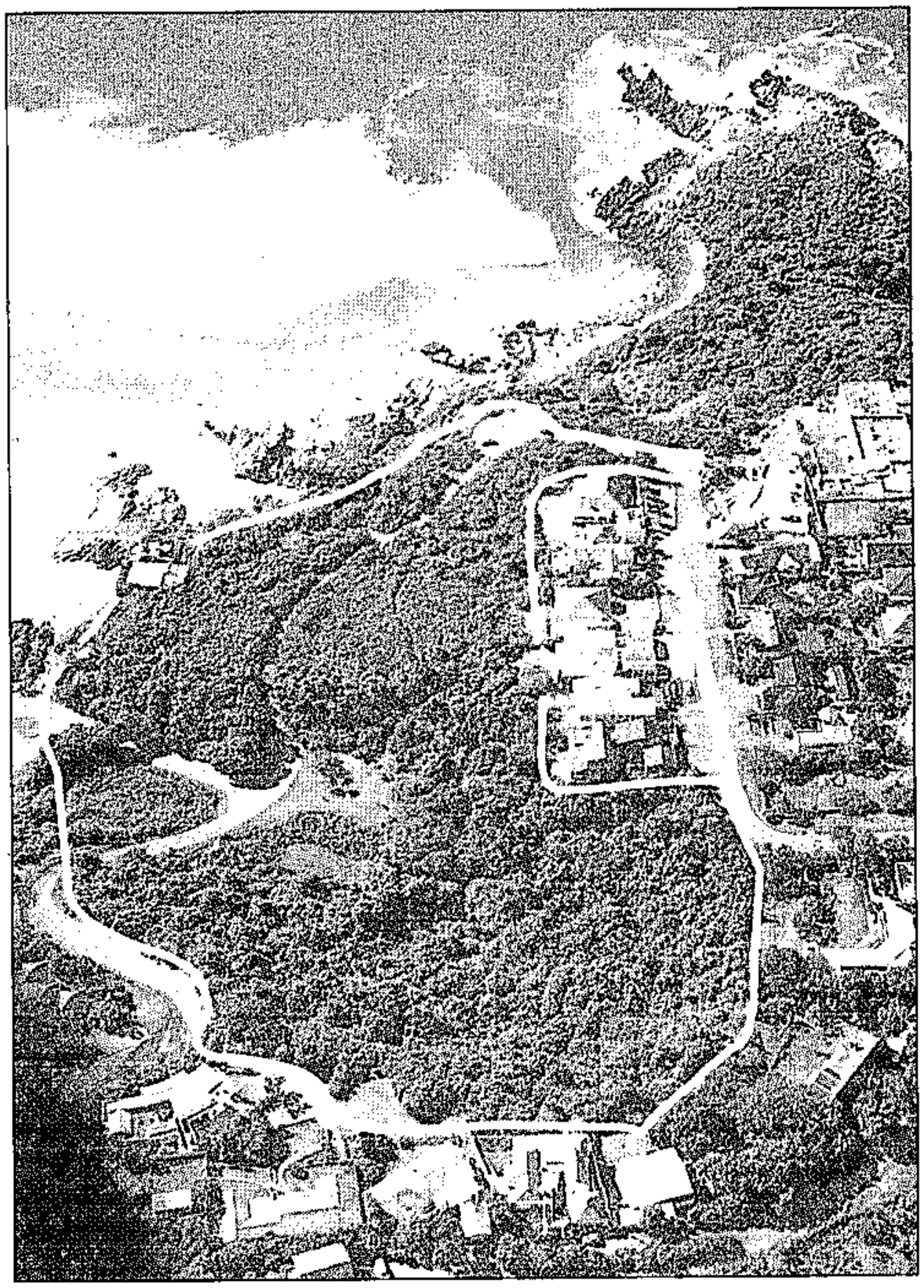
"We want to make an offer as land zoned for public open space, which it is. Public Works say they are looking at the price of the land with commercial potential, but if an application came to council to rezone for sub-division we would oppose it, so it does not have that potential," Roelofsz said.

Public Works' spokesperson Claude Meyer said the department was obliged to offer the land to the council first, and if they were not interested, it would be put out to tender and sold to the highest bidder.

The municipality "must tell us why they won't pay market-related prices and make another offer," Meyer said.

He said if the council turned down a rezoning application, they could be overruled.

Local councillor Xanile Xiplua said he had been told about the Education Trust proposal, and supported it, but had not informed the council about it because he had approved of it in his personal capacity.



UP FOR GRABS: The state wants to sell off this land at a market-related price, which the council can't afford. *PICTURE: MARTY REDDERING*

CHEMICALS *Firm appalled by claims it refused to dispose of waste*

State 'betrayed' Thor

CT (BR) 19/8/98 (56)

SHIRLEY JONES
KWAZULU NATAL EDITOR

Durban — Thor, the Cato Ridge chemical manufacturer implicated in mercury poisoning during the early 1990s, yesterday described the government's allegations that it had refused to dispose of remaining mercury waste as mystifying and hurtful.

Barry Longden, Thor's managing director, said the firm had been betrayed by the parliamentary portfolio committee set up to deal with the problem.

MYSTIFIED *Barry Longden, the managing director of Thor, believes the company is being made into a scapegoat* PHOTO: BARRY TUCK

The company was appalled by accusations that it was responsible for delaying the disposal of 3 000 tons of spent mercury catalyst, kept within three large warehouses and a plastic-lined underground store.

Longden said the company was clearly being used as a scapegoat for government's failure to act on the Davis Commission's recommendations that the toxic compound be recycled.

He said Thor's hands were tied by the state's failure to authorise it to begin recycling.

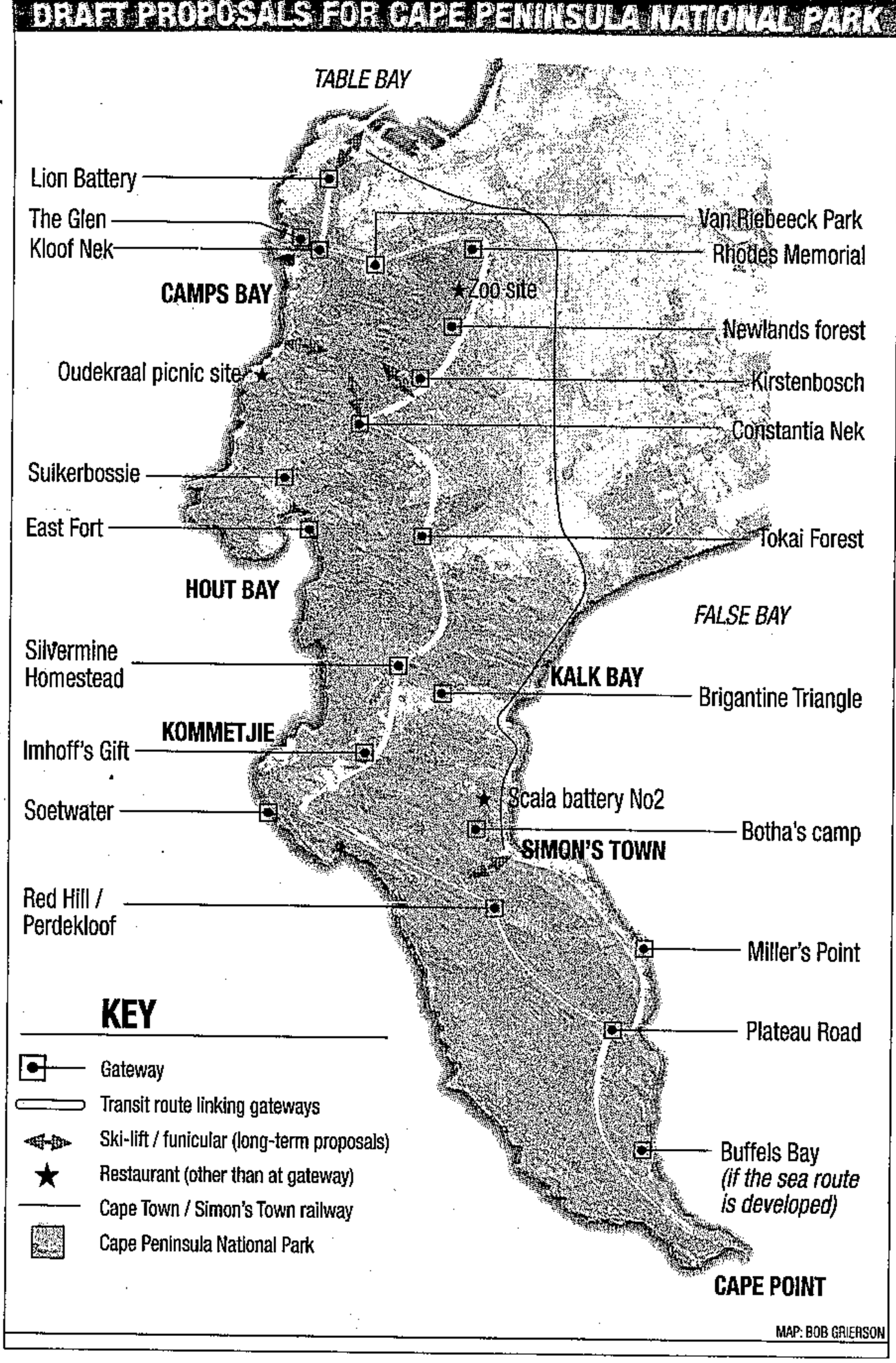
Any attempts to deal with the waste would be tantamount to breaking the law.

"It would appear that Thor is being accused of failing to resolve an issue after having it removed from its control by the very people who are accusing us.

"On the government's own instructions, we are powerless to do anything except to store the spent catalyst so that it poses neither health nor environmental problems," he said.

Longden said complaints that Thor had failed to report on storage conditions were without foundation.

He insisted that Thor had not snubbed government but had done everything to co-operate with every state department involved.



Public says NO to plan for more cableways

(96) ( )

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

ARG 21/8/98

Draft proposals for more cableways on Table Mountain have been rejected at information sessions on plans for the new Cape Peninsula National Park.

But there has been some support for a cableway to the old Scala Battery above Simon's Town.

There have also been strong objections to a small-boat harbour at Buffels Bay in the former Cape of Good Hope nature reserve, now a key sector of the new national park.

The information sessions have been hosted by the Peninsula Mountain Forum this month to discuss proposals made by National Parks in the document, "Draft Development Framework – channelling visitors in the Cape Peninsula National Park".

The assessment of the public's response during the information sessions was compiled by Marie-Lou Roux, chairwoman of the Habitat Council, and a member of the Peninsula Mountain Forum.

These are two of the non-Government conservation organisations closely involved in monitoring development of the new park.

According to Ms Roux's notes, three lengthy information meetings on the proposals for the mountain chain were attended by a broad cross-section of the public and by members of the new park's management team.

"It is clear the people of Cape Town feel strongly about the matter of commercial development within the boundaries of the national park," she said in her notes.

"It was repeatedly emphasised that the conservation of our natural heritage must be the prime consideration in the planning and management of the Cape Peninsula National Park."

The proposals for conference centres, up-market lodges and other facilities within the former proclaimed Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment were all opposed..

CAPE ARGUS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 1998

Cape vulture numbers taking off at De Hoop

Hopes for 100 birds by year 2000

(56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Their numbers aren't exactly soaring, but at least the population of endangered Cape vulture at De Hoop nature reserve near Bredasdorp is on the up.

Now, local ornithologists are hoping this colony will present them with a "millennium present" by reaching the century mark by the year 2000.

Researchers counted 94 of these magnificent flyers during a recent census at De Hoop – the only vulture breeding colony in the Western Cape – and 23 breeding pairs, each with one egg, have been seen on nests during this breeding season which started in June and ends this month.

During the 1980 census, only 80 birds, including 25 breeding pairs, were counted at Potberg.

In earlier years, Cape vulture numbers were on the decline everywhere, mainly because of the injudicious use of poisons by farmers, electrocution by power lines, disturbances in breeding areas, the loss of habitat to urban development and agriculture, and associated food shortages.

Many people were prejudiced against these birds because of their unorthodox looks and totally undeserved reputation as killers and carriers of disease.

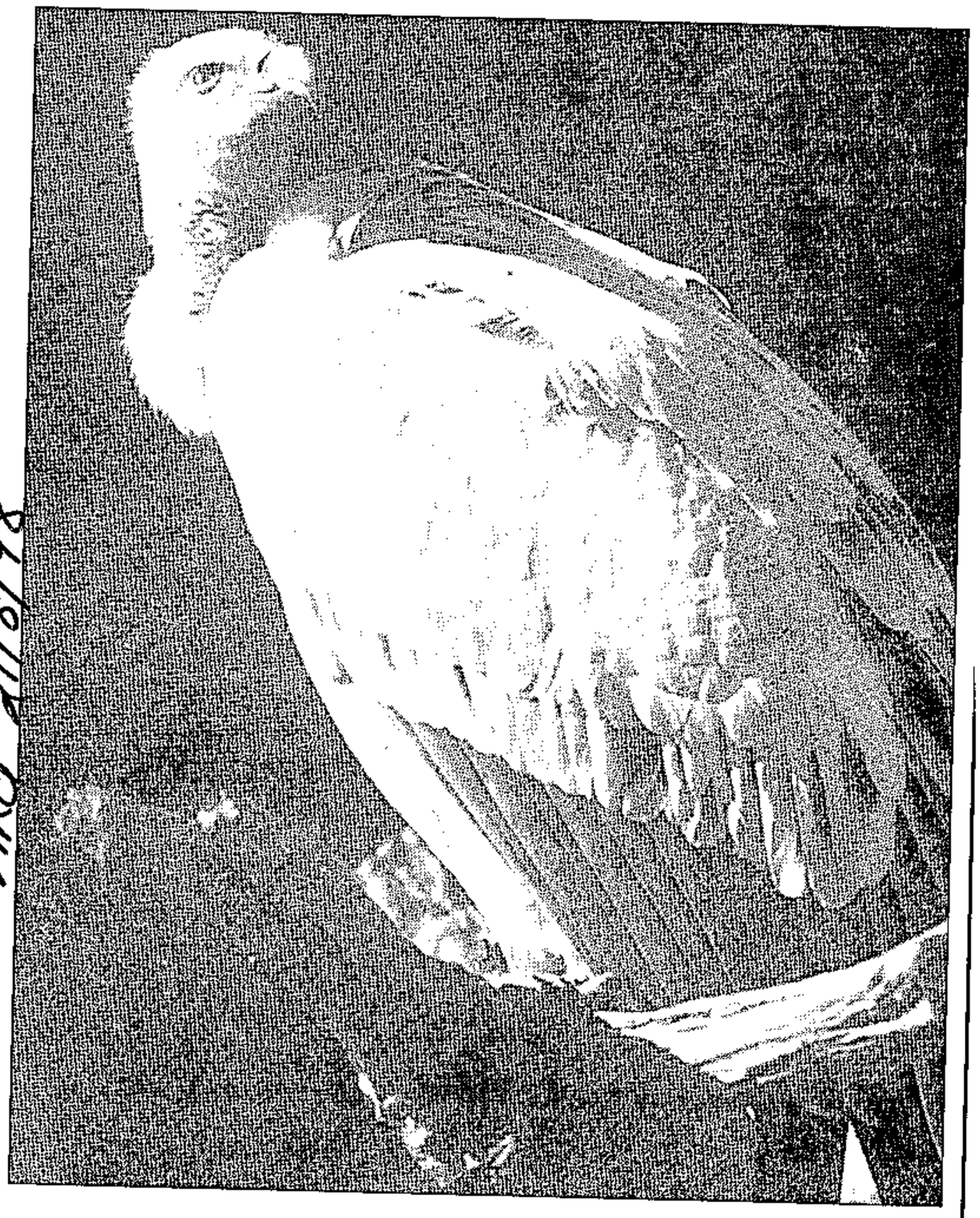
At De Hoop, vulture numbers were also decreasing, in spite of the colony being located within a formal nature reserve.

Then, concerted efforts by nature conservation officials – such as educating farmers about the important ecological role of vultures – started paying off.

Now, with co-operation from the farming community, the negative trend in the vulture population at De Hoop is being reversed.

But it's a long-term process.

"The Cape vulture population grows very slowly," explained Werner Fourie of Cape Nature Conservation. "Only one egg is produced a year, and a vulture chick has only a 30% chance of survival."



On the rise: the Cape vulture population is increasing at last

But researchers believe that a target of 100 birds in the Potberg colony is feasible by the new millennium. Their optimism is partly because of the recent expansion of the Cape vulture's distribution area in the Western Cape.

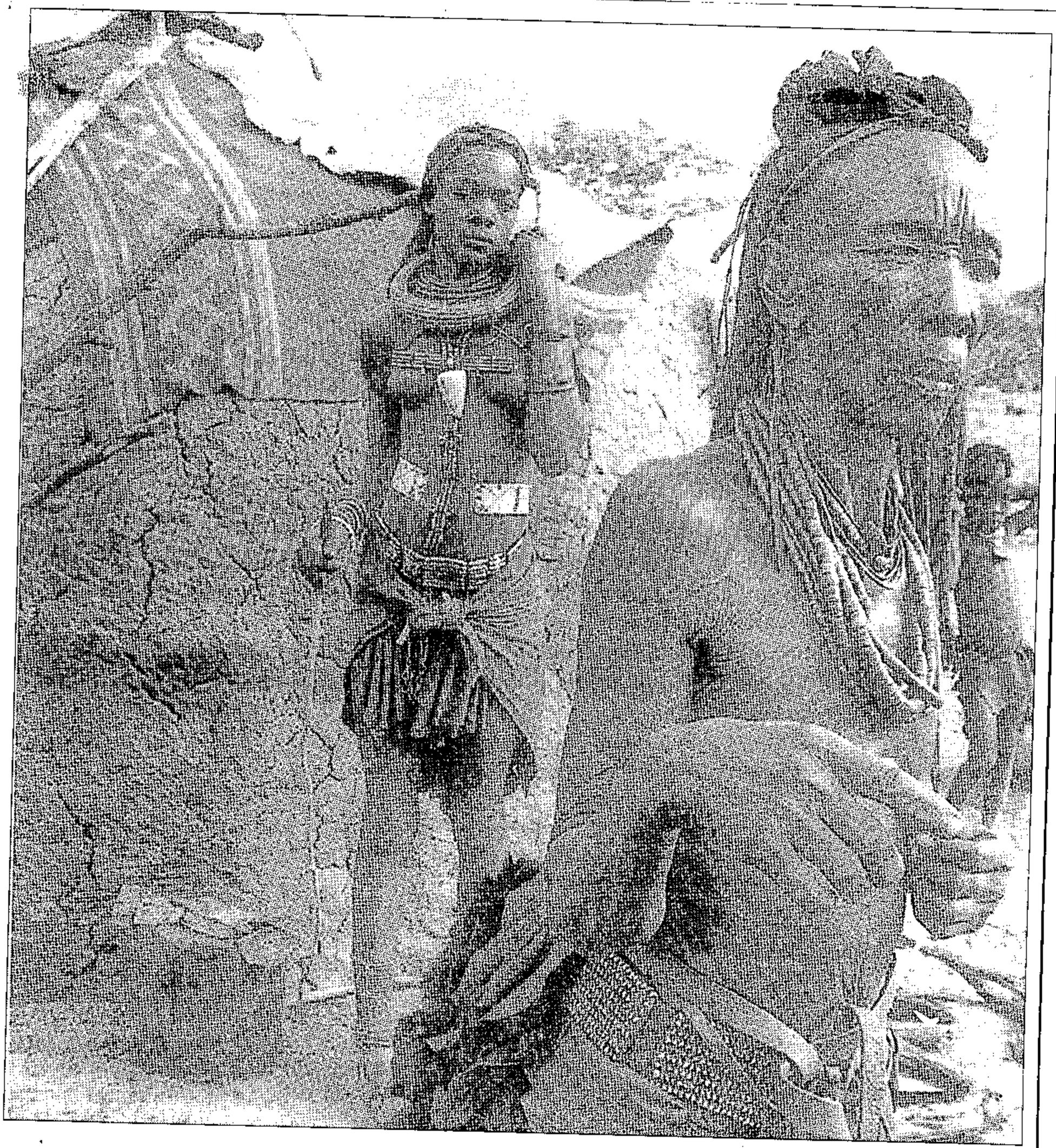
"Initially, these birds were only found in the Potberg-Swellendam area, but now they've been spotted as far east as Heidelberg and Witsand, as well as on the N2-Dassiesfontein Road between Bot River and Caledon," said Mr Fourie.

"And, in May this year, a single bird was observed on the Strand side of Sir Lowry's Pass."

As the distribution area of the Cape vulture increased, it was essential for various communities to become involved in conservation strategies, he said.

"This is necessary to prevent progress from being hampered by unthinking or uninformed action."

He invited interested people to join the Overberg Vulture Working Group, founded four years ago to compile and implement a conservation plan that will ensure the Cape's skies are forever graced by



Proud people: one of the Karin Retief photographs of the Himba people on show at an exhibition in the city

Focusing on the Himba culture

STAFF REPORTER

A photographic exhibition featuring the colourful culture and history of the Himba people of Namibia opens at the Renaissance Gallery in the Pan African Market in Long Street on Monday.

The pictures are by Cape Town-based freelance photographer Karin Retief, who took them during a five-week trip to northern Namibia last year.

The Himba people are among the most successful and economically independent subsistence farmers in southern Africa, but their ancestral lands are under threat because of plans to build a huge hydro-electric dam. This will mean that Himba families will be forced to move and the waters of the dam will cover their ancestral burial sites.

This will have a huge impact on their social structure, as the Himba visit their forefathers' graves to ask for advice and guidance.

There are also concerns about the influence on their independence, and what effect the influx of tourism and a money economy will have on their culture.

The headman in the Kunene region, where the dam is to be built, has set up an anti-dam committee and has said the people reject the dam project.

But many of the young Himba men see the dam as an opportunity which will bring much needed development to their area in the form of clinics and schools.

Ms Retief says: "We pitched our tent in the homestead area of an extended family of about 80 people, and for the first three weeks of our five-week stay I didn't take any pictures at all.

"They weren't used to being photographed at all, so I'd just be with them and do what they did. It was really only in the last week when they were really used to me that I could take pictures of them without their freezing."

A percentage of the sale of the photographs will go to a non-governmental organisation called Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, which has been working closely with the Himba people. The exhibition closes on September 19.

CELEAN JACOBSON and
LAURICE TAITZ (56)

ST 23/8/98

Frogs croak a health warning for man

THE humble frog has outlived the dinosaurs and survived an Ice Age — but it now faces disaster.

Millions of frogs are dying around the the world — including South Africa — and their disappearance could signal a looming ecological disaster for humans.

Scientists and biologists have become increasingly concerned at the rise in amphibian mortality rates and declining populations over the last few years.

Because of their unique physiology and lifestyle, frogs provide an accurate barometer of the Earth's environmental health, or lack of it. They breathe through their skins — which soak up contaminants like a sponge — lay their eggs in water and spend time on land.

In recent times, frogs' breeding grounds have been destroyed by shopping malls and housing developments, and roads through wetlands.

Pesticides and toxic waste have also killed off millions of amphibians.

And even scientists themselves are thought to be responsible for spreading a new fungal disease by handling different species without rubber gloves.

Apart from being decimated by pollutants and toxins, frog's legs are in great demand in the US and Europe, where gourmets consume millions of pairs of the delicacies every year.

In response to the dwindling numbers of frogs and also in an attempt to stop further environmental destruction, an international task force has been set up to investigate the problem.

Mervyn Mason, a researcher at the University of the Witwatersrand's department of zoology, is one of the coordinators of the Southern African Frog Atlas Project, which is linked to the international task force.

"Frogs emerged more than 350 million years ago," he said. "They outlived dinosaurs and the Ice Age, so it is worrying when their numbers start to decline."

The decline in the amphibian population is also disrupting the food chain, contributing to an increase in mosquito-borne diseases like malaria.

The rare Giant Bull Frog once had a major breeding ground near the Fourways Mall, north of Johannesburg, but when the developers of the nearby Tsogo Sun casino called in environmentalists to look for the frogs, not a single one could be found.

The frog, whose loud croak was once a familiar sound to most people in Gauteng, is now one of South Africa's most threatened species.

There are 106 species of frogs in Southern Africa. Of these, 17 were included in the 1988 Red Data Book of threatened wildlife and four were listed as endangered.

South Africa has the highest number of cars per person in Africa and of lead from exhaust fumes are deposited into rivers, harming tadpoles. Pollutants from mining and heavy industry are also having a deleterious effect on frogs.

Most of South Africa's frog species are found in the Cape. The most threatened is the Micro Frog. Once common on the Cape Flats, it has not been seen for 30 years. Its breeding sites in the fynbos wetlands are being drained and reclaimed for housing. And the construction of a road near Kleinmond destroyed another of its prime breeding grounds.

The Cape Platanna is endangered and may be on the brink of extinction. But recently Cape Nature Conservation revealed that 1,2 million of the frogs, worth $2,1-million (about R14,4-million), were illegally exported to the US.

Also on the endangered list are the Table Mountain Ghost Frog, and the Desert Rain Frog, which is under severe threat from diamond strip-mining along the Northern Cape coast.

Blouberg hill to be a 'second Kirstenbosch'?

(56)

Plans for new conservation area

ARG 25/8/96

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Cape Town could soon have a "second Kirstenbosch" on its doorstep.

There are exciting plans for a 1 500ha conservation area, centred on Blouberg hill just north of the city and including a large tract of unspoiled coastal land between Blaauwberg and Melkbosstrand.

The proposed conservation area, which hosts just over 500 plant species and includes a pristine section of the now seriously threatened Renosterveld vegetation, has the potential to become one of Cape Town's premier tourist attractions.

This is because of the fantastic views of Table Mountain, Table Bay and Robben Island from the summit of the 231m Blouberg; the rich historical and cultural legacy of the area, which includes the site of the Battle of Blaauwberg in 1806 and military structures dating from World War 2; its unique wealth of plant and bird life; and the possibility of hiking trails from the coast inland, among other attractions.

Now, the Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC), National Monuments Council, Blaauwberg Municipality, Cape Nature Conservation and private landowners have joined forces to establish a formal conservation framework to protect the area, and a firm of landscape architects and environmental planners has been appointed to prepare a management plan.

"Planning initiatives have recognised the uniqueness of this area and have recommended that it be set aside for conservation purposes," CMC mayor William Bantom told a media briefing on site last week.

"There is no doubt that it's highly conservation-worthy, and that it should be preserved for generations to follow."

Stephen Granger, who heads the CMC's environmental management department, told the briefing that the site's typography and position allowed planners to apply the "coast-to-crest" conservation principle.

"This is something very special and is certainly going to become a prime tourist area. It's possibly the 'Kirstenbosch of the northern suburbs'," Mr Granger suggested.

The natural environment represented one of the most pristine lowland habitats within the Cape metropolitan area, while the northern and western slopes of Blouberg supported an important remnant of Renosterveld vegetation, he added.

"Also, the site is known to contain a number of Red Data species and threatened plant habitats."

Councillor Pierre Uys, chairman of the CMC's executive committee, said the metropolitan area's remaining pristine nature areas were constantly under threat.

"We need to protect and enhance the threatened plant habitats and educate all our citizens on the importance of nature conservation areas in improving our quality of life," he said.

■ The public is invited to meet the project team at the Milnerton library auditorium tomorrow, between 5pm and 8pm, and there will be a formal presentation about the proposed conservation area at 6.30pm.

JOHN YELD

Fairest Cape: the spectacular view of Table Mountain and Table Bay from a World War 2 military post on the summit of Blouberg

Restoring the balance in our national parks

(56) Sowetan 26/8/98

By Russel Molefe
Environmental Reporter

SENIOR ranger Flip Nel did not know that the ruin he spotted on a *koppie* near Pafuri in the Kruger National Park (KNP) in 1983 was Thulamela, an earlier settlement of the Venda people.

But he duly entered the sighting in his diary and a team of archeologists studying settlement patterns began investigations in the early 1990s.

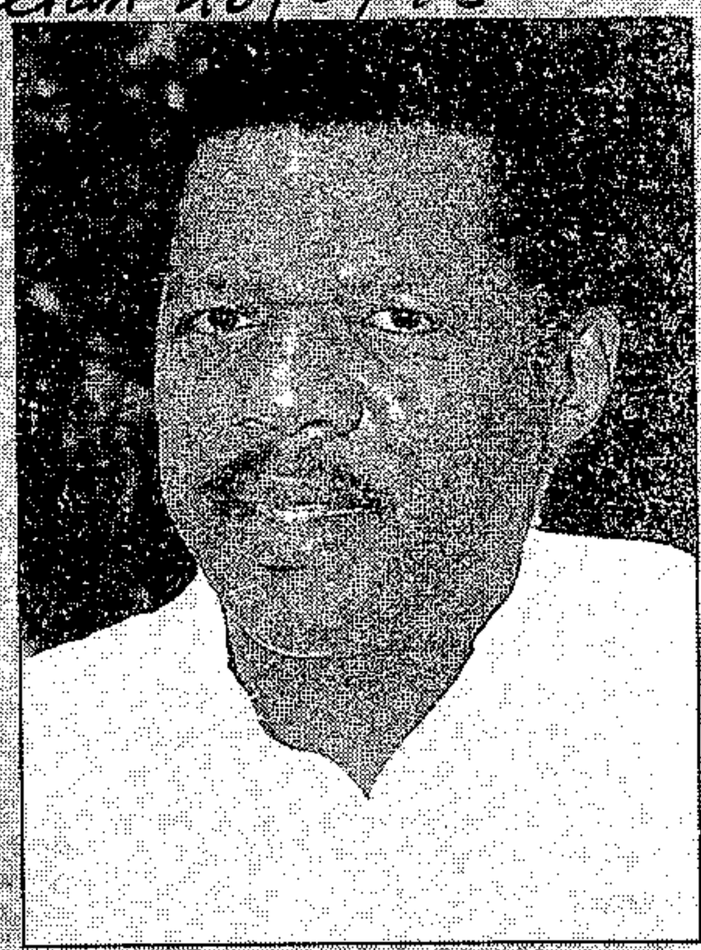
Besides valuable archeological treasures found in the area, investigations also confirmed that the area was once a Venda settlement during the Iron Age.

However, communities in former Venda always knew of the existence of the place even though the history of the KNP was recorded from a Eurocentric point of view.

They lamented the dispossession of what rightfully belonged to them after the previous regime's expansion of the KNP northward in the 1960s, barring access to the area of their descendants.

It became understandable that the communities viewed the KNP as illegitimate – to them, the authorities merely used animal conservation as an excuse to take their land.

The expansion of the KNP also forced the Makuleke community near Giyani off their ancestral land to make way for wildlife conservation.



South African National Parks chief executive Mavuso Msimang ... he has committed the organisation to the transformation of all national parks in South Africa.

Legitimisation

The reconstruction of Thulamela settlement to approximate its original form and allowing communities in the area to perform customary rituals there, marked the beginning of the legitimisation of the KNP.

The Makuleke community reached an agreement with the South African National Parks (SANP) early this year on how it could reap maximum benefits from its ancestral land within the KNP.

The agreement allows the Makuleke community to build lodges on the land and to use the money generated for community development. However, conservation management would still be in the SANP's hands.

The souring of relations between conservation authorities and many black communities dates back to 1898 when president of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek Paul Kruger proclaimed the Sabie Game Reserve.

The reserve became the nucleus of the two million-hectare KNP.

The first warden, Colonel James Stevenson-Hamilton, was appointed and one of his major tasks was the removal of black communities living within the borders of the park.

The removal process was non-negotiable.

The communities had to choose between giving up their land "voluntarily" without compensation or watch their homes levelled.

KNP director David Mabundla put it this way: "In establishing and consolidating the Kruger National Park during the previous era, traditional wildlife scientists or conservationists were perceived as putting more value on wildlife than on human life.

"Many black communities were uprooted from their traditional homes to make way for animals, with great moral and material loss.

As a result, relationships with neighbouring communities became sour."

However, through its social ecology department, the SANP is today striving to redress the imbalances of the past and has engaged communities to play a serious role in conservation.

Head of the social ecology department Dr Yvonne Dladla said the history of conservation in the country was based on a variety of ideologies and values that mystified communities' knowledge of the ecosystem.

"Our primary aim and focus is to move away from the traditional, conservation approach and practice of 'keeping people away' to a more holistic, integrated national and cultural heritage management approach that recognises the significance of community participation in conservation."

Dladla committed the SANP to developing community environmental education programmes that recognise and incorporate cultural perceptions of the environment and a network of community-orientated environmental and cultural heritage centres.

The Thulamela Cultural Heritage Site, which has given value to the KNP in a number of ways, bears testimony to this commitment.

However, the pace of implementing strategies to involve communities in environmental and cultural heritage management must be accelerated, said Dladla.

As part of this process, the SANP organised a symposium this week on "Voices, Values and Identities" at the Berg-en-Dal rest camp in the KNP.

Topics

Topics to be discussed include: African renaissance: reclaiming our voices, reclaiming the cultural heritage of the history of the people of the San in the North Eastern Province and The Whispering in our Parks: hearing, listening and interpreting other voices and values in parks and historic places.

The symposium panellists include Professor William Makgoba of Wits University, Petrus Vaalbois of the Khoisan, Livingstone Maluleke of the Makuleke community, Dr G Gaborone of the University of Botswana, writer-politician Wally Serote and Dr HV Ralushai of the University of Venda.

Forest squatters make an easy living

(56) M+G 28/8 – 3/9/98

Niki Barker

The Dukuduku State Forest near the St Lucia estuary in northern KwaZulu-Natal used to be the largest and best-preserved remnant of lowland coastal forest in Southern Africa. It is now an important component of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, a proposed World Heritage site.

But it is being cleared and burnt systematically by illegal squatters who have invaded the forest and are felling the indigenous trees to fuel a lucrative charcoal industry.

The charcoal is made in the old-fashioned Mozambique method, brought down by illegal immigrants from Mozambique. It is a wasteful method, using a large amount of wood for a little low-grade charcoal.

But it provides a good living for people who need to pay for neither raw materials nor distribution. The owner of the Dolphin supermarket in St Lucia supplies them with bags bought in Pietermaritzburg and sells the charcoal to holiday-makers in his shop.

If those holiday-makers knew they were helping to burn a priceless national treasure, would they care? Probably not. The only people up in arms over the desecration of the forest are hard-core conservationists, and they appear to be fighting a losing battle.

The authorities have a bad record with Dukuduku. In the 1960s the government used vast tracts of the forest and its adjoining grasslands for timber and sisal plantations. The Ncube people who lived alongside the forest were compressed into smaller and smaller areas, until finally in 1989 they were compelled to invade the forest itself.

In conservation terms, their presence was a disaster. They practised slash-and-burn agriculture, snared animals and birds, stripped the trees and littered the forest. In July 1990, the Department of Forestry brought a charge of illegal invasion against them, but to date no one has bothered to enforce the ruling.

The settlement is a headache for KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service staff. Rangers are ambushed and threatened by forest dwellers. The potential for conflict prompted MEC for the Environment Inyanga Ngubane to instruct the conservation service not to intervene any further. But this directive gave the settlers the impression they had won the battle.

The thousands of people now illegally inhabiting the forest live on large plots without having to pay rates and taxes. Local leaders sell potential homeowners a desirable piece of property for a reasonable sum — sometimes as much as a few thousand rands.

Some residents have acquired so much land that they are building cluster-housing developments, with the intention of becoming landlords.

The local and provincial governments are loath to take action. Ngubane has yet to acknowledge a problem exists. There seems to be official paralysis as far as Dukuduku is concerned.

Sangomas stripping forest bare

(56)

Dying trees worry ecologists

ARG 29/8/98

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WARING

The future of Newlands forest is under threat as traditional healers strip hundreds of trees of their bark, a key ingredient in many traditional medicines.

Now foresters are painting the trees with a special green substance that does not harm the tree, but discolours the bark, making it unsuitable for use by the traditional healers.

This method of protection has worked well in KwaZulu Natal, where local traditional healers steer clear of indigenous forests painted with the substance.

Patricia de Wet, of the conservation group Afro Montane Information Forum, said: "The conservation authorities in KwaZulu Natal have introduced strict measures to control bark stripping in their indigenous forests.

"We are now concerned that the trees in Newlands forest are supplying a countrywide demand for indigenous bark."

Traditional healers use powdered bark from a wide range of indigenous trees to treat ailments, from stomach and bladder complaints to headaches.

The significant increase in demand for "muti" by traditional healers recently has led to the destruction of many trees in Newlands forest, on the slopes of Table Mountain.

Once the canopy of trees is depleted, the undergrowth will be exposed to wind damage.

In most cases the lower trunks have been so badly damanged that the trees have little, if any, chance of survival.

In a small grove of boekenhout and black ironwood trees close to the Newlands forestry station, bark has been removed from 23 trees – the oldest of which was 200 years old.

The influx of African immigrants to South Africa may have also increased local demand for traditional medicines.

Two bark strippers were sentenced in Cape Town to fines of R6 000 or one year in jail after being caught in Newlands forest with four sacks of tree bark.

The indigenous trees in Newlands forest are protected by the National Parks Act and heavy fines may be imposed on anyone in possession of parts of these trees.

Afro Montane Information Forum and Cape Peninsula National Parks will be stepping up patrols in Newlands forest, where trees in the accessible lower sections are threatened.

DEATH SENTENCE: conservationist Patricia de Wet examines an indigenous tree in Newlands forest with its bark removed Picture: OBED ZILWA

DNA used to bust seafood poachers

UCT scientists come to aid of law after arrest of trio in Betty's Bay perlemoen crackdown

ST (CM) 30/8/98

BOBBY JORDAN

SCIENTISTS are using DNA testing to crack down on maritime poachers.

This follows a major bust in Betty's Bay where officials arrested three suspects and confiscated over 353 perlemoen found wrapped in bags and stashed in seaside bushes.

Researchers at the University of Cape Town were asked to test the poachers' loot using a sophisticated new DNA technique that has already drawn international praise. South Africa is considered a world leader in this field.

"What we do is take tissue samples from whatever the authorities confiscate and identify exactly what species we're dealing with," said UCT zoologist Dr Neville Sweijd. "We're now looking at extending the technique to a much finer scale — we want to see if we can characterise different species to such a degree we can say which part of the coast they come from."

The technique has already been used in several high-profile international poaching cases, most recently in Mexico.

Said Sweijd: "We were called in to help after Mexican authorities seized a couple of tons of cans from a company suspected of poaching abalone from California. The company denied this, claiming they had imported Australian abalone. We did the tests here in Cape Town and exonerated the company."

DNA-testing also had positive spin-offs for the management of marine reserves, he added.

Betty's Bay Sea Watch spokesman Mike Tannett said rampant poaching along the Cape south coast was rapidly wiping out many species.

"On this stretch of coast we figure that within a year or two the breeding areas for perlemoen outside the reserve will have gone," Tannett said. "Stopping these people is a difficult job — we've managed to slow things down but the manpower is definitely not enough."

Local officials had confiscated 3 000 perlemoen in the past month and arrested about 360 suspected poachers over the past few years, Tannett said.

Poachers sold their catch for about R60 a kilo to middlemen, who sold most of it overseas.

Poaching gangs, well-known in the Hawston/Hermanus area, had now moved beyond Gansbaai and were working the Agulhas area.

"There are so few perlemoen left outside the reserves that the chance of them reproducing is becoming smaller and smaller," Tannett said.

Game parks gamble in dodgy R340m deal

(56) ST 30/8/98

Blyde River Canyon among top resorts signed away in investment

JUSTIN ARENSTEIN

THE Blyde River Canyon and four game reserves are being gambled by Mpumalanga Parks Board officials in a R340-million deal with an American company.

The Heath special investigative unit is poised to swoop this week on the officials who engineered the secretive deal, branded illegal by Finance Minister Trevor Manuel.

At the centre of the controversy is Mpumalanga Parks Board chief executive Alan Gray, who acted without treasury or ministerial approval.

He did not even inform his own board of the deal he made with a one-man Virgin Islands-based investments company, Equifin International.

The company has reportedly arranged for the parks board to hand over three promissory notes worth $50-million (about R340-million) to Fenetic Investments, a US-based company, by November.

In terms of the deal, the board will be given half the money in return for allowing its assets to be used as collateral by Fenetic.

Fenetic will invest the remaining half in high-interest investment schemes for a year in the hope of doubling the money.

If the investment fails, however, the parks board risks losing its assets. These include its new head office in Nelspruit; a series of former hotels used as regional offices; the Blyde River Canyon resort; and flagship reserves at Barberton, Loskop Dam, Songimvelo and Zithabiseni.

The usually outspoken Gray — who has already signed the notes irrevocably binding the assets for a year — insisted yesterday he had been barred from speaking to the press or calling board meetings by Mpumalanga Premier Mathews Phosa and provincial director-general Frank Mbatha.

"Look, I'd love to speak to you and explain everything. It's all very straightforward and above-board, but I've literally been banned from speaking to the media by the premier," he said.

The signature of Mpumalanga's finance MEC, Jacques Modipane, is also on all three notes, but he insisted the signature and official stamp had been copied from unrelated documents and were "blatant fraud".

The three notes, dated July 31, follow an earlier R500-million promissory note brokered by Equifin in December last year and made out to another American company, Pacific Bullion International, but cancelled in March after the company failed to make any of the R50-million-a-month payments as stipulated by the deal.

All four promissory notes were kept secret from the parks board's own board of directors, the Reserve Bank and Manuel, who confirmed through his spokesman, Logan Wort, yesterday that the scheme was illegal.

Manuel said provinces and parastatals, such as the parks board, did not have the legal power to bind the government or its assets.

The parks board's chairman, Francis Legodi, added that his board was not aware of the "astounding" deal. He said the first time he had seen the four promissory notes was on Friday.

"I can't understand why this was never reported to us," he said.

Modipane pointed out that provinces were constitutionally prevented from seeking loans outside of South Africa and needed Manuel's written approval even for domestic loans.

When Phosa learnt that the Sunday Times was probing the deal on Thursday, he issued a pre-emptive press release announcing that he was urgently requesting President Nelson Mandela to launch a top-level probe into the issue.

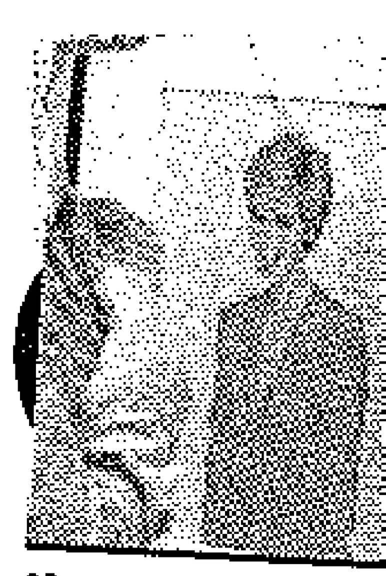
He said he would ask Judge Willem Heath to investigate a string of unnamed board members and senior officials from the parks board for dragging Mpumalanga's name through the mud and for flouting the country's Constitution and legal system.

Heath's Mpumalanga investigation manager, Jonathan Dutton, confirmed his unit had been probing the deal for two weeks and had been on the verge of requesting a proclamation from the President.

"We've verified that the deal didn't go through the Reserve Bank as required by law and have requested that special forensic investigators be seconded to us from the Auditor-General's office," said Dutton.

"The investigation is at a very sensitive stage right now and we've identified all the key players.

"If we move quickly we can prevent any potential loss to the state and taxpayer."



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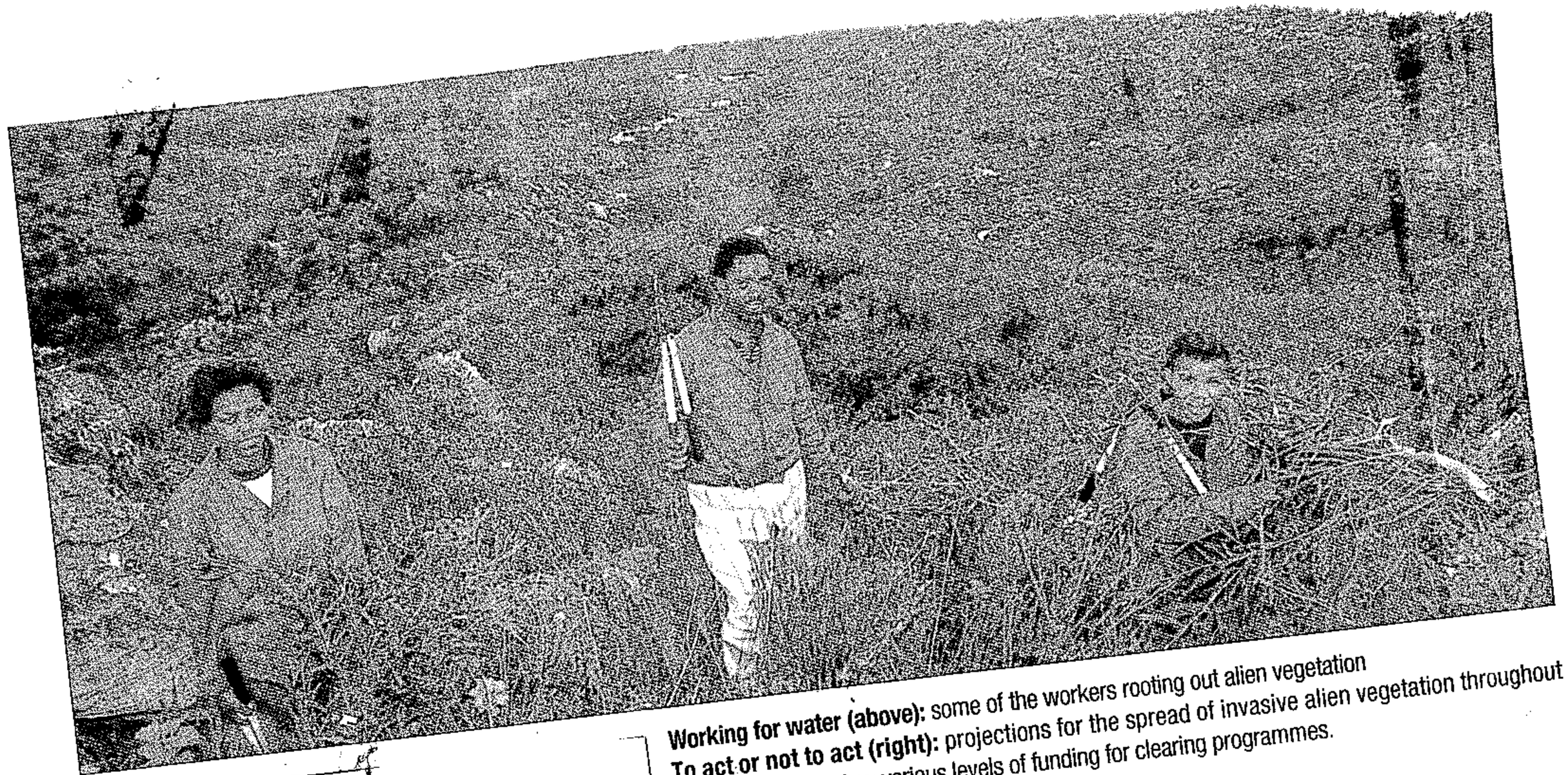
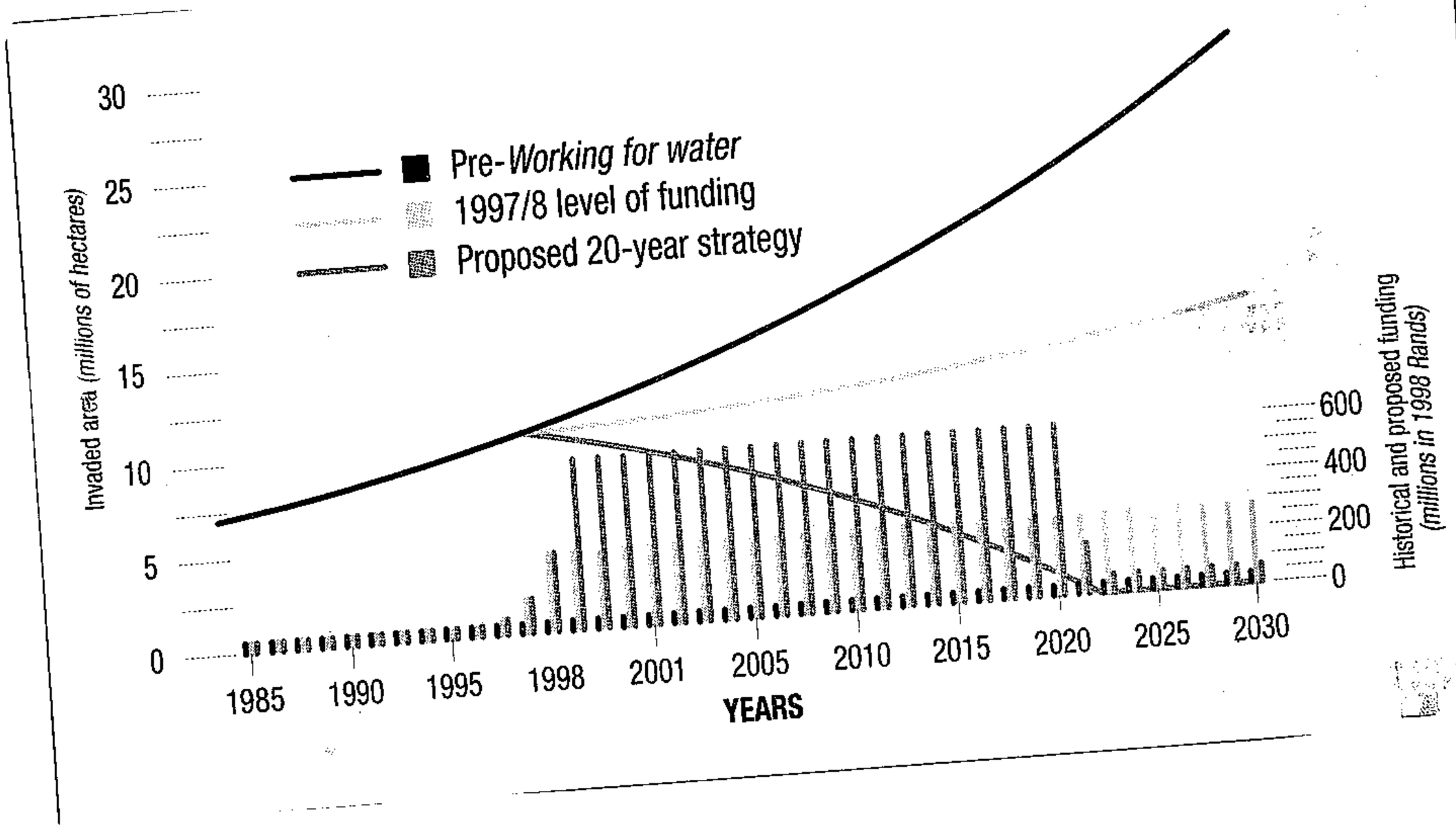


Working for water (above): some of the workers rooting out alien vegetation
To act or not to act (right): projections for the spread of invasive alien vegetation throughout South Africa, based on various levels of funding for clearing programmes.



Ambitious water project looks like a winner

(56) ARG 31/8/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Income up nearly ten-fold in just over two years, a workforce expanded from less than 7 000 to more than 42 000 in the same short period...

In any normal business operation, these kind of figures on a balance sheet would have had the managing director rubbing his or her hands in glee in anticipation of a huge performance bonus!

But the reward from this particular "company" – the Working for Water programme of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry – is much more substantial than just a monetary dividend.

Politicians, sociologists and economists agree that new employment opportunities are central to the healing of South Africa.

The achievement of the Working for Water programme – which essentially involves using previously unemployed people to remove "water-hungry" invasive alien vegetation from South Africa's precious water-catchment areas – in creating 42 000 new jobs is a hugely significant contribution to the nation's healing process.

But there has also been an additional array of associated benefits.

These include health benefits – directly through paid employment and indirectly through relevant training, such as HIV/Aids education – and welfare benefits, because of the programme's emphasis on enhancing the quality of life of the most marginalised sectors of South African society: the poor, the disabled, youth, rural communities and women.

In environmental terms, the programme's work in clearing invasive alien vegetation is proving to be a winner.

Not only is the programme helping to reduce the serious threat that this alien vegetation poses to South Africa's unique natural heritage, but it is also playing a critical role in the Government's drive to promote equity, efficiency and sustainability in the supply and use of the nation's severely limited water sources.

This is because scientists have proved that the invasive alien plants use substantially more water than indigenous vegetation and impact severely on South Africa's rivers and wetlands.

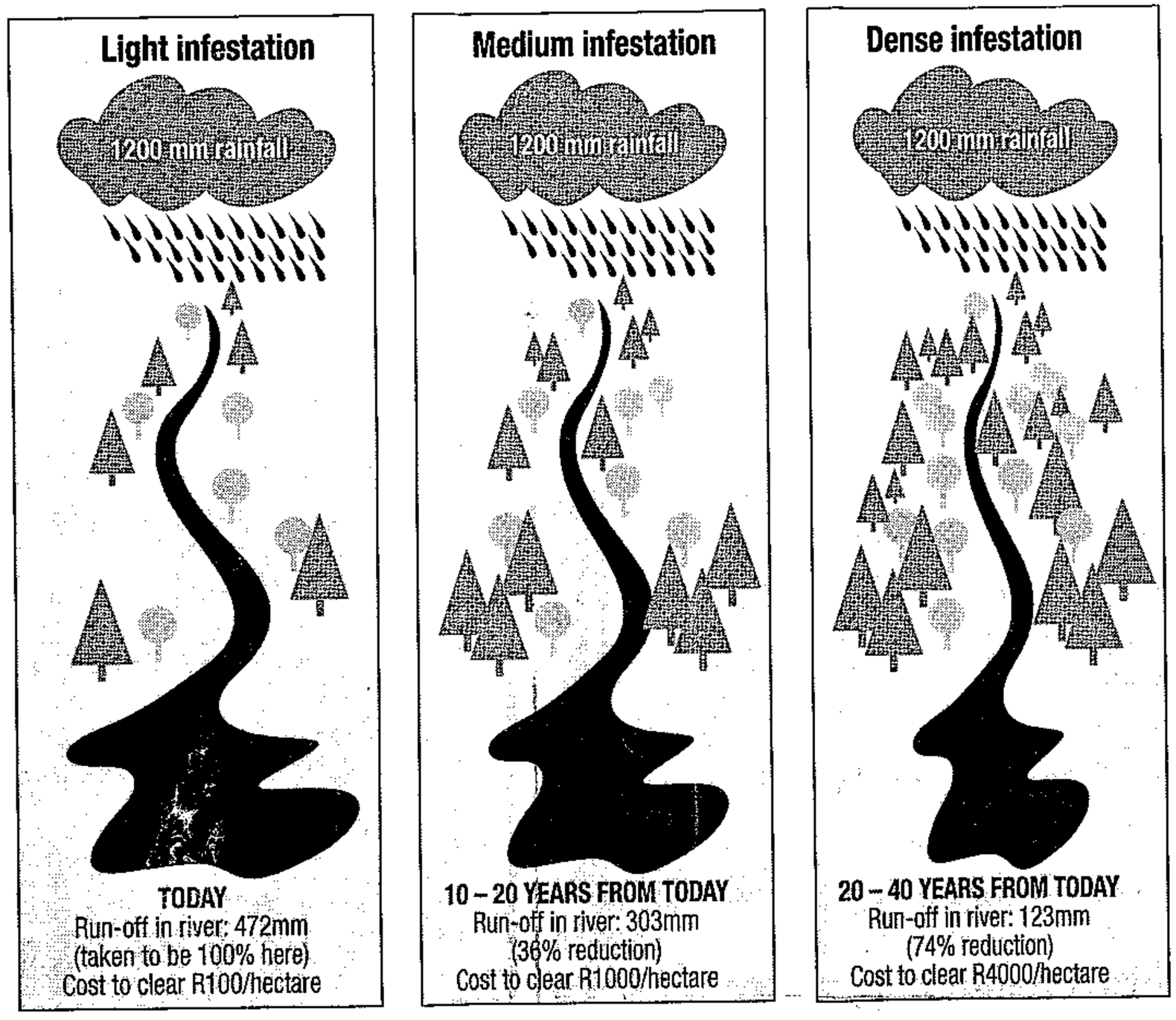
Also, the programme's rehabilitation of degraded land is a vital component of the strong emphasis the Government is now placing on "land care" as part of its bid to secure the sustainable productivity of South Africa's land.

"Working for Water is a product of the Government's commitment to the renewal of our country," says programme leader Guy Preston in the 1997-98 annual report, officially launched this week.

"The programme is a developing example of how we can craft partnerships across line functions, and of how we are promoting governance that can heal the wounds of the past."

In its first year of operation –1995-96 – the programme had an income of just over R27-million. At that stage it employed 6 686 workers who cleared 33 229 hectares of land.

During the last financial year – April 1, 1997 to March 31 this year – its income rocketed to R251,5-million, and 42 059 employees cleared a staggering 220 884 ha in 240 projects across the country.



Vanishing water: scientific evidence shows that infestations of invasive alien vegetation greatly reduce available water from South Africa's rivers

"The Working for Water programme has played a major role in the fundamental changes in our management of water," says Water Affairs and Forestry Minister Kader Asmal.

"With an estimated 7% of South Africa's mean annual (rainfall) run-off already wasted by invading alien plants, the programme has kick-started the concept of integrated catchment management in a way few would have thought possible when the programme started two-and-a-half years ago.

"Equally, few would have anticipated the way in which the programme has been the catalyst for water-management initiatives ... (which) hold enormous promise for our efforts to ensure long-term water security."

The value which the Government places on the Working for Water programme, and the significance of the partnerships it has fostered between various departments, is evident from the comments by cabinet ministers in the annual report.

Derek Hanekom, Minister of Agriculture and of Land Affairs, says the Department of Agriculture had a long history of battling against alien invasive plants.

"The emerging partnership between 'Land Care' and 'Working for Water' initiatives gives new hope that we can take control of these massively destructive plants."

Welfare and Population Development Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi believes the programme is valuable because it "looks at the bigger picture".

"I'm also pleased with the collaboration between the programme and the National Population Unit to pilot reproductive health initiatives," she says.

"This commitment to forming partnerships between the various line functions enhances the return on our investment in the programme."

Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan says the programme is crucial to conserve South Africa's exceptionally rich biological diversity, but that its social relevance is another "compelling" reason for the Government's commitment to it.

"In many ways, poverty and unemployment are the most problematic environmental problems facing the country.

"Unless we deal with what was an assault on the quality of life of so many of our people, there can be no hope of ecological integrity, let alone sustainable living," Dr Jordan states.

Public Works Minister Jeff Radebe describes the Working for Water programme as one of the flagships of his department as well as "helping to demonstrate the wisdom of investing in labour-intensive approaches to heal our land".

"And indeed it is an investment: just the value of the additional run-off of water makes the programme worthwhile, let alone all of the other social, ecological and economic benefits," he says.

Of last year's income for the Working for Water programme, R150-million came from the Government's Poverty Relief Fund, and was only released in November.

This additional funding was a massive boost for the programme which had been budgeting for only 38 projects employing some 8 000 workers.

But attempting to spend the extra R150-million in just 95 working days was always going to be an ambitious undertaking, Dr Preston admitted.

"There is no doubt that it stretched to breaking-point a programme that was already under-managed, and that it tested the already dedicated commitment of those having to administer the finances," he said.

"Furthermore, the building up of a massive work-force, which then had to stop – temporarily – at the end of March, had disruptive side-effects."

But accepting the challenge of the additional funding had been the right decision, Dr Preston added.

"There is also no doubt, however, that by putting this Poverty Relief money to work, we have helped alter the quality of life of many desperate people.

"We have also cleared stands of invading alien plants that would otherwise have spread and grown, making them far more expensive to clear at a later stage."

Ambitious plan to tackle alien plants

(56) ARG 31/8/98

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

More than 10 million hectares of South Africa's precious land has already been invaded by alien plant species and, if left unchecked, the area will double every 15 years.

And in spite of the innovative Working for Water programme of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry which is eradicating the alien plants at an unprecedented rate, the overall extent of alien invasion is not being reduced.

These shocking statistics are revealed in the programme's 1997/8 annual report, released by Water Affairs and Forestry Minister Kader Asmal. The report says invading alien plants are spreading across virtually the entire country, and stands of these plants are spreading at an average of 5% a year. This translates into doubling every 15 years.

"Despite our working at levels never achieved before in this country, and possibly the world, we are not reducing the extent of invading alien plants," says programme leader Guy Preston.

He and his team are proposing a 20-year clearing strategy in which some 750 000ha will be cleared each year at a cost of R600-million.

"After that, there would be only follow-up costs," Dr Preston says.

If approved and put into effect, the plan will create more than 50 000 direct and indirect jobs which will support another 250 000 people, most of whom are South Africa's "poorest of the poor".

Equally important, the clearing work will prevent the loss of an estimated 4 000 million cubic metres of precious water from South Africa's hydrological cycle each year.

More than a million tons of wood will become available for use in the furniture, charcoal and craft industries, among other uses, while more than a million hectares of land will be freed for intensive agriculture or the sustainable harvesting of wild flowers. The strategy would also have important implications for disaster management.

"Fires are the biggest disaster management issue associated with invading alien plants and are capable of causing damage of millions of rands," says Dr Preston.

"Flooding is also strongly correlated with the aftermath of fires."

Scores of other benefits – including improved health, skills transfers and tourism opportunities – will flow from the strategy, according to Dr Preston. He points out that, according to a recent resource economics study, the annual clearing bill of R600-million could be paid from just two sources: the productive use of only half of the water saved by removing the alien plants, and the savings from being able to postpone expensive capital projects such as new dams to meet South Africa's growing water demands.

Project looks a winner, page 13

Parks board CE denies claims of unlawful deal

BD 31/8/98 (56)

Deborah Fine

MPUMALANGA Parks Board CE Alan Gray strongly denied a newspaper report alleging that he and other parks board officials had jeopardised the province's ownership of several premier nature reserves through an unlawful R340m offshore deal.

A Sunday Times report claimed yesterday that Gray had entered a deal with a Virgin Islands-based investments company in terms of which the parks board would hand over promissory notes worth $50m to a US-based company.

According to the report, half the money would be returned to the board for allowing its assets to be used as collateral by the US company, while the remaining half would be invested in high-interest schemes for a year.

If the investments failed, the parks board risked losing its assets, including the Blyde River Canyon resort and reserves at Barberton, Loskop Dam, Songimvelo and Zithabiseni. It was alleged Gray orchestrated the deal without ministerial or Reserve Bank permission, and without the knowledge of the parks board.

Gray said in a statement yesterday he felt compelled to respond to the "incorrect and defamatory report", even though Mpumalanga premier Mathews Phosa had banned him from communicating with the media.

Phosa last week requested President Nelson Mandela to issue a proclamation enabling the Heath Unit to investigate certain parks board activities, including "the issuing of promissory notes to certain financial institutions".

Of serious concern were suspicions that the signature of Mpumalanga finance MEC Jacques Modipane on the promissory notes may have been forged.

The unit was appointed to fast-track investigations into illegal activities in government departments.

Gray said the Sunday Times report was "riddled with inaccuracies and portrays a misunderstanding of the facts". Denying that he or any other officials had acted illegally, he said that the deal in question was designed to raise funding and was both legal and authorised.

He welcomed a Heath Unit investigation because this would clear his own name and those of other board members.

Phosa's spokesman Oupa Pilane said yesterday he could not confirm the Sunday Times report because the matter was still under investigation.

He rejected claims that Phosa had ordered Gray not to speak to the media.

Most Gauteng rivers are 'grossly polluted'

(56) Star 31/8/98

Danger of diseases like cholera a big threat as unchecked sewage spills begin to take their toll on the province

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Local councils have become some of the major polluters of water resources in the Gauteng area, as sewage systems collapse due to poor levels of maintenance and upgrading.

Although environmental organisations have fears that these conditions are conducive to diseases like cholera, the Gauteng Department of Health has indicated that they cannot comment on the matter "unless it becomes a public issue".

Marius Keet, deputy director: water quality management for Gauteng region, said several court cases were currently in progress regarding pollution, which the Endangered Species Protection Unit had brought against the Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, Erwat (a water care company), and Meyerton municipality. Another case had also been brought against Everite.

According to Keet, existing legislation makes provision for polluters to receive fines of up to R50 000 for a first offence and up to R100 000 for every consecutive offence.

"I imagine that for big companies R50 000 is not that much, but there are conditions attached to fines that could cost polluters millions of rand," Keet said.

Bacterial levels in most rivers have shown increasingly high levels of E.coli and faeces.

The latest Jukskei River water quality report shows that most rivers and their catchment areas, including the Crocodile River, downstream of the confluence of the Jukskei River, the Little Jukskei River catchment area, the Braamfontein, Modderfontein and Sand spruits catchment areas, and the Jukskei River, are considered grossly polluted and unfit for recreational use.

E.coli counts of as high as 6 000 000 parts for every 100ml of water are still being reported in the Jukskei River downstream of where it flows through Alexandra township. An E.coli count of 200 parts to every 100ml of water is considered unsafe.

Increasingly high levels of bacteria being measured

E.coli counts in the Jukskei at the Little Jukskei have fluctuated from 100 000 parts to 10 million per 100ml of water from October last year to June this year.

The lowest E.coli levels in the Jukskei at Alexandra during this period were above 100 000 parts per 100ml with levels frequently reaching close to 10 million parts.

E.coli levels in the Braamfontein Spruit have peaked at a maximum high of close to 10 million counts.

Local councils have cited as their biggest problem budget cuts which have not allowed them to effectively maintain and upgrade their sewage systems.

Rodney Nay, executive officer for waste water for the Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, said: "Many of the problems are due to the fact that money is scarce and we are having to use limited resources to respond to emergencies and do preventative work."

He said the council also did not have the manpower or the equipment to do preventative maintenance work.

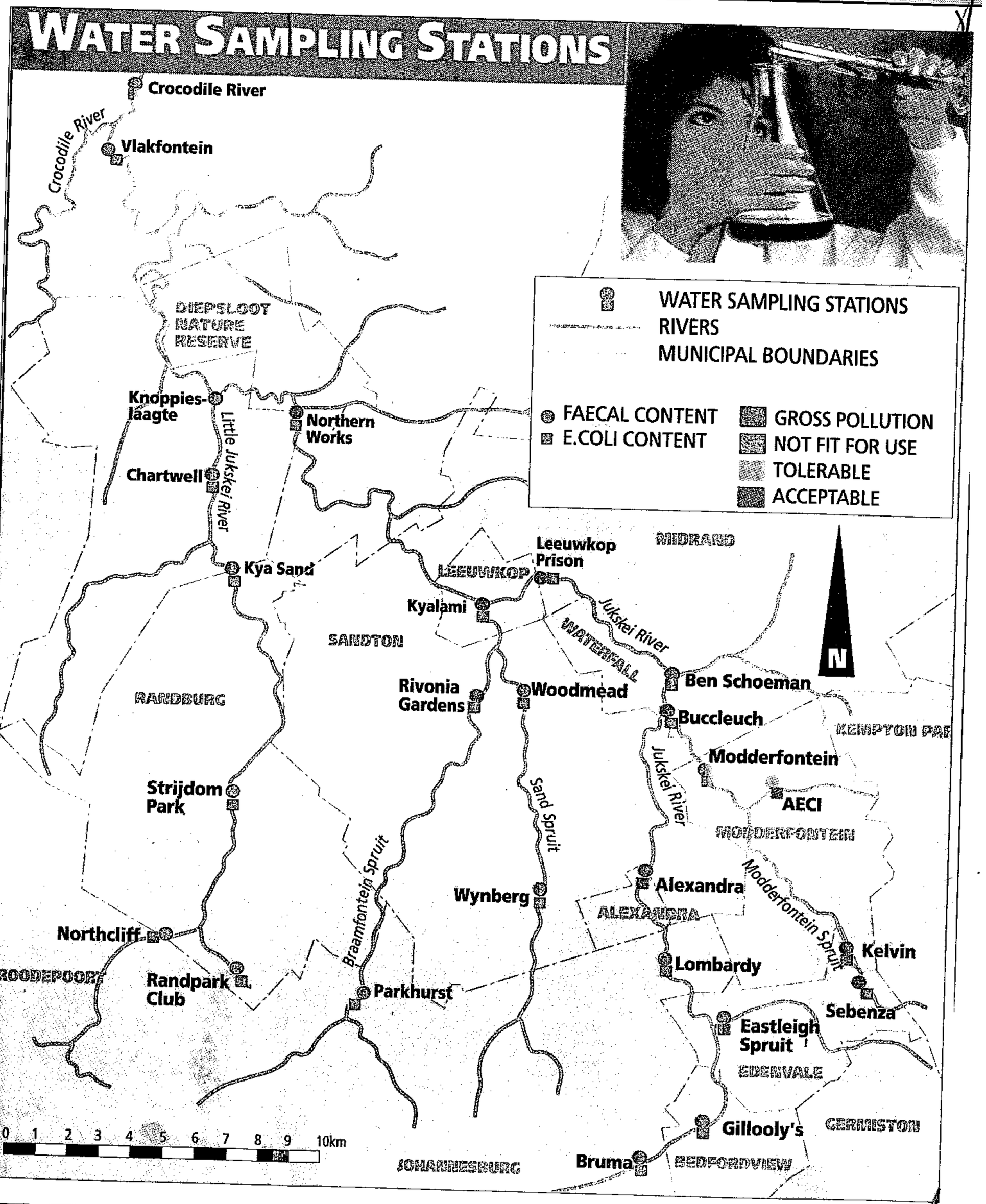
The council also does not have a team of inspectors to verify spills and relies exclusively on the public to report problems.

Nay estimated that it would cost the council an additional R5-million annually to do maintenance of the sewer system and "well into the hundred million" to do upgrading.

"The sewer system was designed for a small city, now it has to cope with increasing density and ageing. These problems have not happened overnight, they have taken a number of years (to develop)," he said.

According to Nay the council deals with about 2 000 blockages and spills per month.

However, in Johannesburg's eastern metropolitan substructure alone it is estimated that there are over 1 000 sewage blocks and spills per month.



I warned that parks deal could mean jail – Phosa

(56) Star 1/9/98

Premier says R340-million loan agreement is illegal and was never officially approved

AFRICAN EYE NEWS SERVICE
Nelspruit

Mpumalanga Premier Mathews Phosa said yesterday he had warned Mpumalanga Parks Board chief executive Alan Gray "he would go to jail" if he went ahead with the R340-million loan scheme with investment broker Fenetic Investments.

Speaking at a press conference after the Heath special investigative unit raided Gray's office, Phosa said both he and Finance Minister Trevor Manuel had ruled against the deal when Gray approached them for permission to pursue it. He stressed that the MPB had effectively been seeking retroactive approval for the scheme.

"Gray never mentioned details at all, but both I and Manuel felt the proposal in general was *ultra vires*. I told Gray that he would go to jail if he pursued it," said Phosa.

The Heath investigative unit, which has been probing the scheme for the past fortnight, yesterday spent four hours raiding Gray's office, after serving search and seizure papers on him.

Unit investigation manager Jonathan Dutton would say only that four of his own staff and three forensic auditors from the auditor-general's office took part in the raid.

Phosa also said an injunction had been served on the MPB to prevent it from issuing any negotiable instruments. He insisted that his request last Friday that Gray not speak to the press was not a gagging order.

"I asked them not to make any announcements until after a full board meeting on Wednesday (tomorrow), when we can thrash out this entire issue.

"It was not a gagging order, just an attempt to handle this story in the best way," said Phosa.

Gray was unable to defend either himself or the supposedly illegal R340-million deal.

Heath has been probing the secretive deal for the past two weeks but was formally asked by Phosa to probe the scheme on Thursday.

Manuel branded the deal illegal on Saturday, pointing out that it contravened the Borrowing Powers of Provinces Act of 1996, and did not have approval from the state treasury, the Reserve Bank, the national loans co-ordinating committee or Manuel's own office.

The deal, which was brokered by Virgin Islands-based Equifin International, is meant to extend a R340-million loan to the cash-strapped MPB in return for its issue of three promissory notes to the same value.

The notes state that they irrevocably and unconditionally bind all the MPB's assets to Fenetic for one year.

The parks board's assets include game parks at Blyde River Canyon, Loskop Dam, Barberton and Songimvelo, but there is growing uncertainty whether they were included in the audit. The reserves and a number of other assets are reportedly held in a trust fund for the MPB.

The promissory notes were drafted and signed by Gray, his financial executive Nicholas Krugel and provincial Finance MEC Jacques Modipane.

Modipane insisted at the weekend that he had never seen the promissory notes and accused Gray of fraudulently lifting both his signature and an official stamp from unrelated documents.

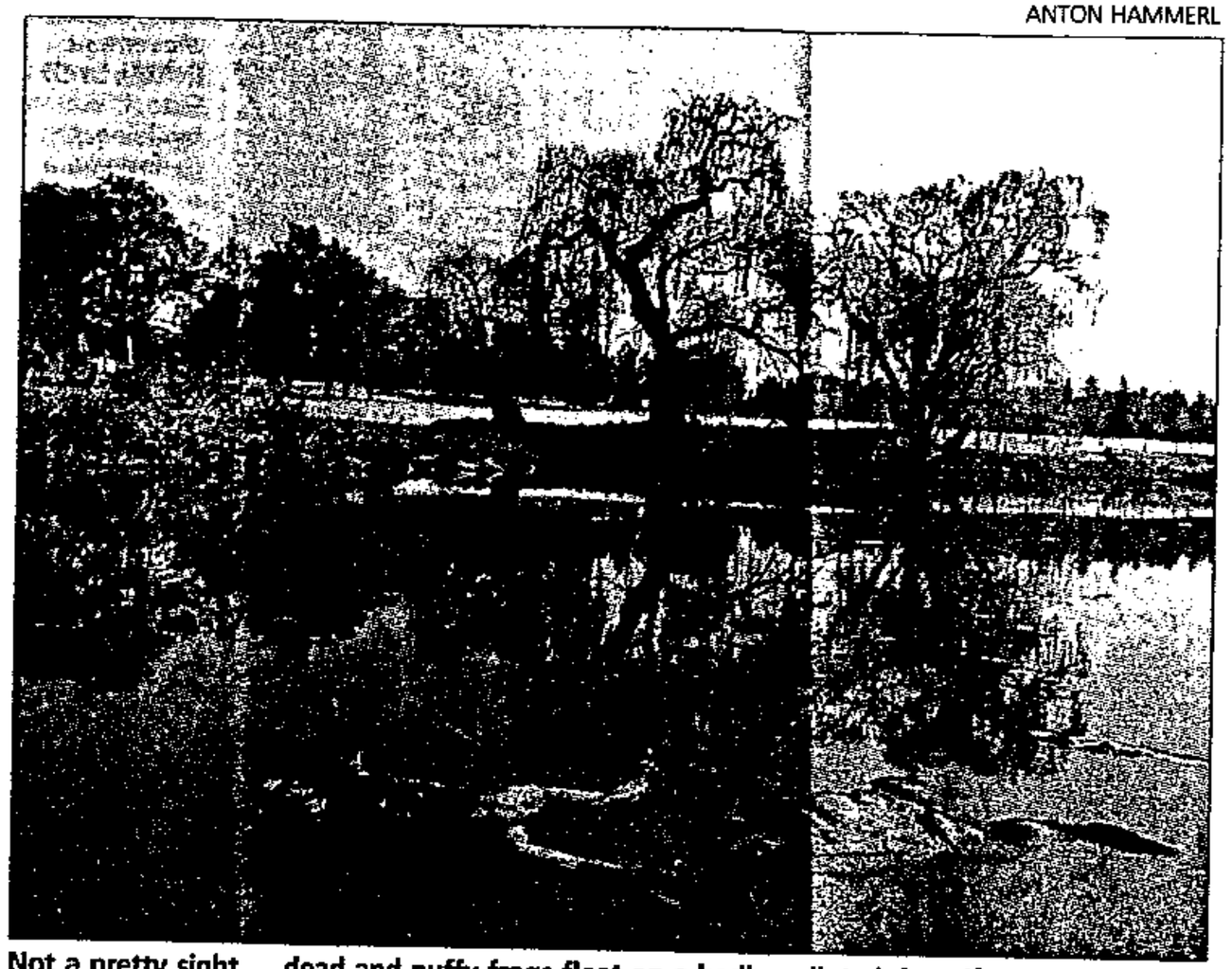
Phosa confirmed that Gray and Modipane confronted each other on the allegations at his house yesterday morning and agreed to submit the original notes for expert inspection to determine whether there had been any fraud.

Environmental degradation threatens SA tourist industry

(56) Star 1/9/98

Places bring in millions of rands in foreign currency, but many visitors shocked by state of neglect

ANTON HAMMERL



Not a pretty sight ... dead and puffy frogs float on a badly polluted dam. If we are to attract tourists we must ensure that the environment is properly maintained and not merely exploited.

By Winnie Graham

Since South Africa's transition to democracy, tourism has made a "fantastic" contribution to the economy, but environmental deterioration and pollution are in danger of impeding it.

Concern at the effects increasing pollution and environmental degradation could have on tourism were raised at the recent partnership launch of a top travel consultancy, Grant Thornton Kessel Feinstein of Sandton, and the Randburg firm of environmental planners, Environmental Design Partnership (EDP).

Former Star journalist James Clarke, who gave the keynote address at the tourist trade gathering, said the main obstacle to developing tourism in South Africa was that the Government did not realise the environment was the basis of the industry.

Tourism and the environment could no longer be dealt with separately.

"Yet South Africa has been allowed to enter a period of serious environmental degradation," Clarke said.

"Tourists must be appalled, for instance, at the state of South Africa's air and the signs of scenic degradation too."

Clarke mentioned that four-fifths of South Africa's tourists originated from just 20 countries and were often shocked at the state of South Africa's air.

The "major tourist route" – the N4 route to Kruger Park from Gauteng – was an exhibition of industrial cynicism and a demonstration of how industry was taking advantage of the current hiatus in government environmental controls.

He said: "The basis of tourism, the scenic beauty and wildlife in the great outdoors, does not entail scenery-wrecking structures or rearranging landscapes. The basic raw material – scenery, flora and fauna – is already in place. It needs nothing more than maintenance and that is where we are being let down."

Clarke said the environment was to tourism what soil was to crop farming. "Tourism in the future will underpin the economy as surely as the mining industry has in the past ... but it will demand nothing of the environment other than that we look after it."

Set to make up for the lost decades

As the situation stood, SA was poised to make up for all its lost decades in tourism, and become one of the world's greatest tourist destinations.

Recent surveys revealed that most tourists arriving in SA said they were looking forward to wildlife and then scenery. When they left they have reversed that order, saying they enjoyed the scenery "and then the wildlife".

It was an indication, said Clarke, that places such as St Lucia and the Drakensberg were earning South Africa billions of rands each year.

He pointed out that the brightest spot on South Africa's economic horizon was tourism.

Gillian Saunders, a principal in Grant Thornton Kessel Feinstein and authority on the tourism and hospitality industries, said overseas arrivals grew by 17,7% last year. Tourists from African countries grew by 15,1%.

"Of the 5,44 million tourists, a quarter were from overseas," she said.

Since 1993, overseas tourist arrivals have grown at an average rate of 22% a year, she said.

The Reserve Bank figure for receipts from foreig tourism indicate an averag growth of 31% a year from 199 to 1996.

"This," Saunders said, "re veals in some part what a fan tastic contribution to the econ omy and balance of payment tourism can make."

She announced at the gath ering that a partnership be tween her firm and EDP ha been formed.

EDP's chief executive Gareth Singleton, said there was a crucial need for a "seam less fusion" between tourism and environment – hence the two firms' partnership.

He said it was not enough to continue to conserve natural areas or even to expand conservation areas if they were going to be "isolated honey pots surrounded by mining, ever-present air pollution and over-grazed and under-productive farmland".

One ocean surrounds our world – let's take good care of it

(56) ARG 1/9/98

Professor **KADER ASMAL**, Minister of Water Affairs and vice-chair of the Independent World Commission on the Oceans, sets the scene for today's world release in Lisbon of a historic report on the oceans

We live on land, not on sea. We are creatures of the earth. But our world, the Earth, should also be named Water.

From the vantage of space we are the Blue Planet, coloured by our seas, not by our soils and forests. The oceans divide our continents and nations, but are themselves one body of water, covering seven-tenths of the planet.

We ourselves are made up of water: it dominates our lives.

With all the oceans, water can still be a scarce resource. South Africa is a dry country, short of water; but we are surrounded by the three great oceans of the Atlantic, the Indian and the South.

This seeming anomaly has a human side. One of South Africa's major attractions is Robben Island, separated from Cape Town, the Mother City, by the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

When Nelson Mandela made his personal journey from a Robben Island prison cell across Table Bay, later to become the first democratically elected president of our country, he also undertook a journey for all of us from the past to the future.

Symbolically, his journey across the divide of Table Bay shows how water links our lives, our nations and our continents.

This year is significant as the International Year of the Ocean, and it is, therefore, fitting that the last major exposition of this millennium is being held in Lisbon, Portugal, with the theme: "The Oceans – a Heritage for the Future".

South Africa has contributed to the expo, and its pavilion was officially opened on August 3.

In the opening speeches there were references to the Renaissance which lifted Europe out of the Dark Ages and led to the exploration of the world's oceans, and this was likened to an ongoing African Renaissance.

A special message was sent to the exposition by President Mandela, which served to underline the public trust that we must fulfil in our handling of the oceans.

"The future is not ours," said the president, "but is borrowed from our children and grandchildren."

For the last three years, the Independent World Commission on the Oceans has been hard at work. Its report is to be released in a final plenary session in Lisbon today.

The title of the commission's report is: "The Ocean ... Our Future", reminiscent of Nelson Mandela's words.

Fittingly, the Oceans Commission was initiated – and has been chaired – by Mario Soares, former president of Portugal.

The Fifth Plenary Session of the commission was held in Cape Town in November last year, when Dr Soares in his address at the opening ceremony – at which our president was present – expressed his pleasure at the important historical and present links between Portugal and South Africa, and the role the oceans play in fostering these links.

The Oceans Commission has worked towards establishing a new paradigm for the oceans.

How should humanity guard and use the oceans for the next thousand years?

The commission considered a range of subjects, but concentrated on a few broad themes, each of which forms a chapter of this final report.

Promoting peace and security is addressed not only in terms of naval conflict, but also by considering illegal trade (including drugs), piracy and the need to foster international environmental standards and agreements, such as those that attempt to control pollution.

South Africa is aware of the dangers of oil pollution to our endemic African penguin, but also of the risks from the transport of nuclear waste around our coastline.

Fortunately, piracy on the high seas is not a Southern African problem, as it is in some other developing parts of the world, where it has in fact been growing.

The quest for equity in the oceans considers such issues as north-south and south-south relations. The commission's report emphasises the need for a fresh approach that gives full expression to the notion of human solidarity.

The oceans link our common yet diverse heritage – market forces leading to short-term gains need to be balanced by the longer-term needs for sustainability, fairness and justice in a world uneven in its financial, environmental and human resources.

Co-operation between the business and environmental sectors is pointing a way, as exemplified by the establishment this year of the Marine Stewardship Council, which aims to certify fish products as coming from sustainable fisheries, thus simultaneously allowing consumer-informed choices and promoting marine conservation.

Science and technology is a driving force for both promoting exploitation and sustainability. But there is still much we need to learn about the oceans.

Ocean visionary: Kader Asmal

The deep sea bottom has been looked on by far fewer people than the surface of the moon, for example, and we have hardly started to tap the riches of the seabed away from the shallow continental shelves: aqua incognito indeed.

The next thousand years will see the use of science and technology in the oceans in ways that we can hardly imagine.

For instance, if humans start to populate the open seas, perhaps in underwater cities, will they form new nation states or will their inhabitants truly be the first global citizens?

Whatever uses science and technology are put to in the context of the oceans, they must be used for sustainable development, adopting the "precautionary principle" of first do no harm.

We owe this, as President Mandela said, to our children.

How can the public contribute? Firstly, increasing awareness of the role and value of the oceans in our lives, even to land-locked countries, is a necessity.

The Lisbon Expo is being visited by tens of thousands, including young people. In South Africa we are fortunate to have, for instance, the Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town with its outreach programmes to young people and the disadvantaged.

We also celebrate National Marine Day annually, with an emphasis on informing school-goers of the value of our oceans and marine resources.

The use of electronic communic tion, via the Internet and websites, burgeoning and is certain to becom more and more significant. The cha lenge is to bring the inhabitants of th developing world into this electron global village and to promote awar ness of our oceans as we do so.

The commission also addresse issues of economics and ocean gove nance. Throughout its report ru the thread of the compelling need f the wise use of the oceans: sustai able, equitable and peaceful exploit tion for the good of all humanity.

More than anything, it is humane document, one that I Soares and all the commissioner drawn from many disciplines ar nations, may be proud of as a contr bution to the people of the next m lennium.

Later this year the report will presented to the General Assemb of the United Nations, when it hoped some of its far-reaching co clusions and recommendations wi be taken up.

Our world is in one ocean.

In this, the International Year the Ocean, let us all appreciate t Water Planet we inhabit and hold in good order for future generations

It is, indeed, a public trust plac on our shoulders in the interest those who will follow us.

Heath special unit begins parks board hearings

BD 2/9/98

(56)

NELSPRUIT — The Heath special investigative unit began closed hearings in Nelspruit yesterday into allegations of an illegal R340m deal engineered by the Mpumalanga Parks Board, African Eye News Service reported.

The unit's head, Judge Willem Heath, flew into Mpumalanga on Monday to personally lead cross-questioning at the hearings. Neither Heath nor his local investigation manager, Jonathan Dutton, were prepared to say who had been subpoenaed to testify yesterday.

The hearings followed a four-hour raid on the parks board's head office in Nelspruit on Monday and were expected to last until this afternoon. Heath swooped on the parks board after allegations that board CE Alan Gray had agreed irregularly to issue three promissory notes worth US$50m to SA-based investment broker Fenetic Investments.

The promissory notes, branded illegal by Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, irrevocably and unconditionally bind all the parastatal's assets to Fenetic for one year.

Fenetic was supposed to extend a R340m loan to the parks board during the period and in return would use the parks board's assets as collateral for investing in high interest off-shore banks and investment schemes.

Manuel and his provincial counterpart Jacques Modipane stressed that it was illegal in terms of the Provincial Borrowing Powers Act of 1996 for provincial bodies to seek loans without approval from the Reserve Bank, state treasury, national loans co-ordinating council or the finance ministry.

"The investigation is at a crucial stage. We are moving very fast to ensure that absolutely no money is lost. This is one of the biggest cases we have and is an absolute priority for our Mpumalanga unit," Heath's spokesman Guy Rich said.

Stressing that the promissory notes had not yet been handed to Fenetic, Rich said the unit's investigation was pre-emptive and was being assisted by special forensic auditors from the Auditor-General's office.

Sources within the Mpumalanga Parks Board confirmed that Gray, his financial executive Nicholas Krugel, and various board directors had received summonses.

The parks board had been prevented from issuing any promissory notes or other negotiable instruments by an interdict served on it on Monday morning. — Sapa.

Parks board will probe chief executive

Star 3/9/98 (56)

By Justin Arenstein

Nelspruit – The Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) will investigate its own chief executive, Alan Gray, for improper management after he allegedly failed to disclose an illegal R340-million loan scheme he engineered using state assets as collateral.

Gray issued three promissory notes worth $50-million (about R314-million) to a South African brokerage firm two months ago and used parks board assets as collateral in return for the R340-million loan, without ministerial, treasury or Reserve Bank approval.

Complaining that Gray gave him "endless sleepless nights", Premier Mathews Phosa said yesterday that he had ordered the parks board's directors to probe whether Gray was fit to run the parastatal.

Phosa accused Gray of being the central figure in a "long and unhappy litany" of highly embarrassing scandals in the province.

These included the R12,5-billion Dolphin deal three years ago, Gray's continued co-operation with unnamed but supposedly discredited consultants, and various unauthorised overseas trips at state expense.

Phosa said Gray had been subpoenaed to testify before the Heath investigative unit for his part in the R340-million loan scheme.

"Gray is a very busy man, and as far as I am concerned, enough is enough. People in this province want to sleep in peace at night and so I've requested the board to look at his behaviour and report back to me within 14 days," said Phosa.

MPB board chairperson Francis Legodi accepted Phosa's request to probe Gray but said discussions within the board had confirmed that at least some of its members had known of the loan scheme.

Legodi previously said the board had been kept in the dark and had never approved the scheme.

Gray insists he had provincial cabinet approval for the scheme.

The MPB will appoint the investigation team on Wednesday. – African Eye News Service

Parks Board man probed by own men

(56)

Sowetan 3/9/98

THE Mpumalanga Parks Board will investigate its own chief executive, Mr Alan Gray, for improper management after he allegedly failed to disclose an illegal R340 million loan scheme he engineered using state assets as collateral.

Gray issued promissory notes worth R340 million to a broker two months ago and used Parks Board assets as collateral in return for a R340 million loan but neglected to get treasury or Reserve Bank approval.

Complaining that Gray gave him sleepless nights, Premier Mathews Phosa said yesterday he had ordered the board's directors to establish whether Gray was fit to run the parastatal.

Phosa accused Gray of being the central figure in a long and unhappy series of embarrassing scandals in the province, including the R12,5 billion Dolphin deal three years ago, his continued cooperation with unnamed consultants and various unmandated overseas trips at state expense.

Phosa also revealed Gray was to be grilled in the Provincial Legislature after an auditor-general's report exposed mismanagement in the Parks Board, and that he had been subpoenaed to testify before the Heath special investigative unit for his part in the R340 million loan scheme.

"People in this province want to sleep at night so I've requested the board to look at his behaviour and report back to me within 14 days," said Phosa.

He ordered the board to formulate proposals for restructuring the parastatal's financial management, and pledged increased funding and political support once this was done.

Loan scheme

Board chairman Mr Francis Legodi said he accepted Phosa's request to investigate Gray but said discussions within the board confirmed at least some of its members had been aware of the loan scheme.

Phosa confirmed that the board's problems were partially due to political inference but insisted that a special investigation was necessary.

The premier added that Gray had failed to produce the original notes for tests to prove the validity of the signature of finance MEC Mr Jacques Modipane.

Modipane denies signing the notes and has accused Gray of forging his signature. – *Sapa.*

Judge's graft probe goes under cover

M+G 4 -10/9/98 (56)

The investigation into the Mpumalanga Parks Board's dodgy deals is to be carried out in secret, reports **Justin Arenstein** *from Nelspruit*

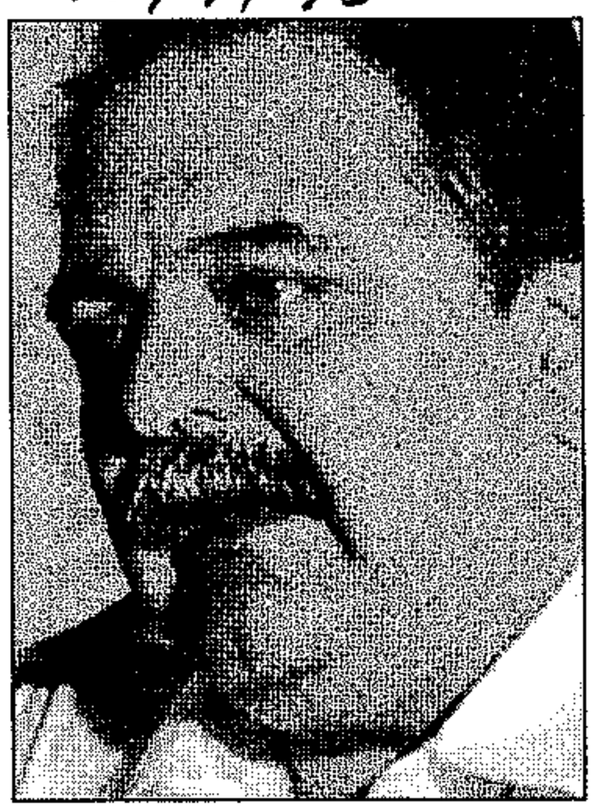
Judge Willem Heath personally took control this week of investigations into a dodgy R340-million offshore loan deal set up by the Mpumalanga Parks Board, and promptly threw a blanket of secrecy over his special investigating unit's operations.

Insisting that secrecy was essential to prevent massive losses to the state, Heath commandeered a room in the Nelspruit Magistrate's Court and refused to say who he was interviewing or which allegations were being investigated.

The unit raided the parks board's head office for a second time on Wednesday afternoon and seized additional documents that reportedly further incriminate the board's chief executive, Alan Gray.

The raid follows reports that Gray drafted three promissory notes worth $50-million to a dubious South African-based brokerage, Fenetic Investments, in return for a one-year, R340-million loan to his cash-strapped parastatal.

Although Gray used at least three legal firms to draw up the promissory notes, which irrevocably and unconditionally bind the board's assets to Fenetic as collateral, he neglected to get the necessary approvals for the "groundbreaking" deal.



Gray: His deals give Mathews Phosa sleepless nights

Both the Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, and his provincial counterpart, Jacques Modipane, have branded the deal illegal and pointed out that Gray was obliged to get Reserve Bank, state treasury, national loan co-ordinating committee and ministerial approval in terms of the Borrowing Powers of Provinces Act.

Modipane also accused Gray, during a series of heated exchanges this week, of fraudulently attaching his (Modipane's) signature and official stamp to the promissory notes to imply government approval.

To date, Gray has failed to produce the original notes for forensic tests, but has been served an interdict preventing him from cashing the notes or issuing any more.

In December, Gray issued a fourth R500-million promissory note to an American precious metals investment company, Pacific Bullion International (PBI), but was forced to cancel the note in March.

PBI allegedly tried to use the promissory note to buy almost 12 tons of gold in London, but the deal fell through and PBI was unable to pay any of its scheduled monthly payments of R50-million to the parks board.

Gray denies that he issued any more promissory notes, but there are indications that at least one more was drafted to an American company.

The Fenetic deal isn't Gray's first attempt to cut corners and secretly approve massive "groundbreaking" deals using the region's game parks as leverage.

The *Mail & Guardian* revealed how he tried to sign away exclusive commercial development rights to all of Mpumalanga's core game parks and the Blyde River Canyon in a secret R12,5-billion deal three years ago. The 50-year deal, with the shady Dubai-based Dolphin Group, was frozen and renegotiated after the exposé.

Gray survived the scandal but was still trying to explain to the provincial legislature this week why he spent massive amounts of tax money on companies in which he had financial or other interests.

The dubious contracts, first reported in the *M&G* and verified by the auditor general, included air flips with Gray's helicopter companies and medical insurance with his medical rescue company.

Mpumalanga Premier Mathews Phosa said this week that Gray's "litany of unhappy and highly embarrassing" deals gave him sleepless nights. Telling the press that he'd had enough, Phosa ordered the parks board's directors to probe whether Gray was fit to run the parastatal and urged them to replace him as soon as possible. — African Eye News Service

Plans to recycle 90% of Gauteng government's paper

(56)

Star 4/9/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

The Gauteng department of environmental affairs has started a project to recycle as much as 90% of the thousands of tons of waste paper generated by government departments monthly.

MEC for Environmental Affairs Nomvula Mokonyane says the intention is to get all government departments, hospitals and local authorities involved. She hopes the project will be adopted nationally.

"If we can recycle, we can save millions of trees," she said.

Five thousand bins for the collection of waste paper will be distributed to provincial government offices from today.

Two companies from Johannesburg, Rainbow Waste and Attuned Investment, will collect and recycle the paper.

The department has spent thousands of rands on the bins and on attempts to create awareness about recycling among government workers.

It is estimated that up to 75% of the energy and 50% of the processing water can be saved when paper is manufacturing from recycled waste paper. Air pollution can be reduced by up to 95%.

Free State varsity approves new sign language course

Star 4/9/98

Bloemfontein – A three-year undergraduate course in sign language, which will be recognised as a full language course, has been approved by the faculty of humanities at the University of the Free State.

This was announced by Dr Theo du Plessis, director of the unit for language facilitation and empowerment, at the launch of the unit in Bloemfontein on Wednesday night.

'Language can aid democracy'

Du Plessis also said that from 1999, the programme of his unit will be organised so that sign language becomes an integral part of training.

He said that languages were important for democracy and democracy could be built by recognising the diversity of language.

The new unit will strive towards a functionally multilingual dispensation in South Africa that will empower linguistically disadvantaged citizens as a contribution towards the establishment of democracy.

The UFS unit is the biggest in the country. It runs simultaneous interpreting services for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Cape Metropolitan Chamber and the Free State Legislature.

It is the biggest training centre for interpreters in South Africa and is funded by the Flemish government.

In conjunction with the universities of Witwatersrand, Potchefstroom and Port Elizabeth and the Department of Justice, 1 500 court interpreters will now have access to formal training as a result of the new programme being planned.

Kobus Kellerman, chairman of Deaf SA, said the University of the Free State was very motivated in its decision to promote the use and knowledge of sign language, but there were also other universities interested in this area.

He warned against sign language being given "novelty status". There was a need to prevent sign language structures becoming fragmented.

Also runs interpreter services

Kellerman said there were few resources in the field and too few qualified sign language interpreters.

He appealed to interested universities to set up an inter-university committee to ensure that sign language and interpreting services were developed and co-ordinated to achieve a common goal. – Sapa

'LD: A pregnant baboon was painted white shortly after she was knocked down with her infant on Misty Cliffs Road. The lled.

ZOOLOGISTS REPORT BACK

Baboon-proof dustbins mooted to reduce killing

CT 4/9/98

(66)

BABOON troops in the Scarborough, Kommetjie and Da Gama Park areas face being totally wiped out as residents continue to torture and kill baboons with cruel abandon. **PRISCILLA SINGH** reports.

A FOUR-MONTH study by two consultants appointed by the South Peninsula Municipality to investigate human-baboon conflict has shown a "marked decrease" in the troops which frequent these areas.

The mortality rate has increased sharply and more maimed baboons have been spotted among dwindling troops.

Baboon-related problems have been occurring for a long time in the southern Peninsula. In the past two years, an increasing number of difficulties arising from human interaction with baboons has prompted ratepayers to demand action from the authorities responsible for managing the troops.

The municipality decided to intervene because the National Parks Board and the Cape Nature Conservation were unable to help at the time. Zoologists David Gaynor and Ruth Kansky were employed to investigate how the situation could best be managed.

Gaynor said that after intensive studies of baboon and human interaction in the area, the municipality was given a comprehensive report, including recommendations which residents can implement.

"People have a perception that there are too many baboons but there are actually too few. We stand to lose the last of the troops north of Kommetjie and the Fish Hoek reserve if this senseless killing does not stop.

We may lose the last baboon troops north of Kommetjie if this senseless killing does not stop

"We also strongly object to suggestions of a special permit to shoot baboons on sight, and it is recommended that the South Peninsula Municipality does not support requests for a letter of 'no objection' for this permit," Gaynor said.

He said they were starting a "baboon fund" to enable the implementation of their proposals and to finance experiments testing the effectiveness of the proposed methods of keeping baboons out of residential areas.

Another recommendation was that Waste Management Services investigate baboon-proof dustbins, or a change in the way waste is removed, to ensure that the baboons have no access to this unnatural food source. It was also recommended that road signage in these areas be replaced with more suitable ones.

Gaynor and other conservationists met Western Cape MEC Mark Wiley yesterday to discuss the report, which is expected to be released next week.

Rolff van der Linden, manager of the Allandale Holiday Cottages, wrote a stern letter to the municipality outlining how his guests have been terrorised by baboons.

"The baboons defecate on the roofs, break branches out of trees and have frightened our horses to the extent that they are not feeding properly," Van der Linden said.

He estimates that the troop now exceeds 200 and "must be professionally culled to approximately 50 so that we as residents — and the baboons — can again lead a normal life".

However, Gaynor says this is not so.

"The baboon population outside the Cape of Good Hope Reserve is in a state of decline. Even if the females reproduce at their maximum capacity, the dead baboons will not be replaced. In two years or less, there won't be any baboons left outside the reserve," Gaynor said.

The World Wildlife Fund has donated money for Gaynor and Kansky to continue their studies on baboons in the Peninsula.

Known deaths and injuries this year include:

- April 20: An adult female baboon was mauled by two rottweilers in Rooibok Road, Scarborough. She went into a fenced-in yard with an infant. The infant managed to escape and has been "adopted" by a female in another troop.
- April 23: An infant baboon was knocked over by a car on the Kommetjie-Scarborough road. The troop was below its sleeping cliff and members were feeding on the side of the road.

The baboon had broken back legs and could not move. The adult male of the troop, Joe, was guarding it and would not let anyone approach. The baboon died later that night.

- April 30: Another infant was hit by a car and was later seen being carried by its mother on the stomach in a semi-conscious state. It is not know whether it survived.
- June 5: An adult female was found poisoned in Da Gama Park by a Welcome Glen resident. It was later shot by police. An autopsy by the state veterinarian reported poisoning from Aldicarb and that she was pregnant.
- June 12: It was reported that Joe, the only adult male of the troop, was shot in Da Gama Park. His body has not been found, but he has not been seen since.
- June: A female and her infant were knocked over on Smithswinkle road. The mother was killed but the infant survived.
- June: An adult male was captured and shot by rangers in Cape Point reserve.
- July: Two infants died of unknown causes.

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Water pollution becoming life threatening

(56) Star 5/9/98

There is a crisis of fast-growing proportions in the entire waste management arena, SHALO MBATHA reports in the last of a series on issues around water

PRE-EMPTIVE ACTION: A householder living near the Blesbokspruit took matters into his own hands when the quality of the water became too bad – he erected this sign warning people not to go anywhere near the stream

Water pollution and mismanagement of waste in Africa have reached such alarming levels that southern African countries have embarked on joint strategies to curb their spread.

Most people who live on the African continent have the perception that waste, effluent and pollution either goes down the river into oblivion, sinks to the bottom of a lake, dam or ocean, or is blown away by sandstorms.

Southern African countries have had anti-water-pollution policies and proper management of waste for many years, yet no serious effort has been exercised to protect the environment.

Not a week passes by without a public alert or outcry about yet another grossly polluted water source. Our water resources need urgent intervention. The most polluted river in the country is the Jukskei, which flows – or sludges – through densely populated Alexandra.

E.coli, raw faeces and a cocktail of other life-threatening pollutants dominate the waste found in the river. International standards say 200 parts of E.coli per 100ml is unsafe, yet the Jukskei River has 6 million parts per 100ml – far, far above the unsafe level.

New permits

Water Affairs and Forestry deputy director Thami Sokutu said: "We have to act urgently to rectify the degradation of the human living environment. The Government intends to integrate the pollution and waste management strategy to halt and alleviate the current situation.

"In the past, organisations were issued with individual 'medium' and 'activity' licences. Each organisation will now be issued with a permit to cover all aspects of pollution and waste management."

Unfortunately, local councils have been found to be the biggest culprits in polluting the environment in Gauteng.

But a local councillor said that although the maintenance and upgrading of sewerage pipes were the responsibility of local councils, "currently, sewage pipes are over-extended and are in a state of perpetual disrepair". This was because the large number of people living in the townships had swelled even further since the scrapping of section 10 of the Group Areas Act. Occupancy per room in the townships had also increased and informal settlements had mushroomed.

Sokutu said: "It is regrettable that some local councils are so poor that they cannot afford the proper disposal of their waste material. For instance, the Umtata council is so poor that they dump their raw sewage into the local river. Even if we prosecuted the council, nothing would change. Instead of fining them, we should rather help them to manage their waste better. With councils that are not struggling, it would be a different case altogether."

But the department itself is cash-strapped, and has just six inspectors to monitor 2000 industrial sites.

The Department of Water Affairs is responsible for regulating, maintaining and monitoring the standards of what is in the sewerage and effluent pipes to avoid toxicity seeping into water resources from industry.

"In the past we used the command-and-control approach in policing effluent, but we realised that having standard controls for the country was impractical. For instance, the Eastern Cape has a lot of water and some effluent can be neutralised naturally if disposed of responsibly. But the situation in Gauteng is different because of the high concentration of mines, which produce large quantities of acid that cannot easily be washed away downstream," said Sokutu.

The current fines for companies that pollute is R50 000 for the first offence and R100 000 for any subsequent offence.

"We realised that for some companies it was easier for them to get rid of their waste irresponsibly and hope not to get caught, or to pay the fine. But we now have the authority to prosecute the company as well as charge the company for the cost of cleaning up," said Sokutu.

In an attempt not to discriminate against, or shut down, small businesses which would be bankrupted by fines and cleaning charges after an environmental disaster, the Government has imposed a levy for companies that deal with the transportation and handling of hazardous waste, to help provide some sort of insurance against such occurrences.

Sokutu said negotiations were taking place with the Department of Justice about setting up a natural resources court that would specialise in the prosecution of polluters. Currently, those who pollute are a low priority for the overloaded justice system.

He also urged all South Africans to protect water resources and report any polluters to the various departments of water affairs nationally.

'Killer' asbestos in low-cost homes

Hundreds of Cape Flats houses have been built with panels that may cause cancer

(56) ARG 5/9/98

LINDA DANIELS

Asbestos-cement panels, made of the same asbestos fibre that causes lung cancer, is being used to build cheap houses on the Cape Flats.

Doctors fear the material could lead to health problems, but building authorities insist the asbestos-cement is safe.

Hundreds of state-funded low-cost prefabricated houses using the asbestos cement have been built on the Flats. They include a number in a new housing scheme in Delft South. The walls and roofs are made of corrugated asbestos-cement sheeting.

According to the Western Cape housing department, the asbestos fibres in asbestos-cement, which have been linked to lung cancer, pose no threat to the health of the inhabitants of the homes.

The sheets of asbestos-cement used in the Cape Flats homes consist of asbestos wedged in between layers of ordinary cement. The light-weight asbestos acts as an insulator.

Eric Strijdom, the Cape Town quality auditor for the SA Bureau of Standards (SABS), said: "Once the fibres are set, they are completely inert (inactive).

"(Asbestos-cement) is virtually everlasting and it doesn't corrode and it's very quick to build."

He said that the SABS had tested the material's strength, profile and thickness.

But, according to Mario Rocha, the acting manager of the SABS materials testing department in Pretoria, the SABS did not test the asbestos-cement's health specifications.

He said the health specifications for asbestos products were set by the Department of Labour, as laid out in the Occupational Safety Hazard Act.

Neil White, a respiratory specialist at the University of Cape Town's medical faculty, said: "It seems that we have been using asbestos for low-cost housing for years.

"But the problem is, someone only knows they're ill in 20 years' time when they die of cancer."

He said lung cancer and mesothelioma, a more specific lung disease, were directly related to asbestos inhalation.

"We are not quite sure how much or the dose you require to cause cancer.

"But if there is any health risk, why do it?" he asked.

Not taking the possible health risks associated with asbestos into account, communities still regard the prefabricated housing structures as inferior to brick structures.

Caroline Poeler of Kamassie street, Delft South, says her home is falling apart.

Mrs Poeler says she chose an asbestos home for her family because it was considerably bigger than the "match-box homes" being offered by the State.

The gap between the walls and the roof in the Poelers' home is now stuffed with newspaper in an attempt to keep out the winter weather.

In her backyard, Mrs Poeler keeps a bucket of asbestos fragments that have fallen off her home since she moved in last year. Picking up a piece of the asbestos, she showed how easily it breaks.

The asbestos broke in half after she knocked it on the ground.

"To me it looks like real asbestos because it breaks easy. If they say it's cement then it can't break so easy," she said.

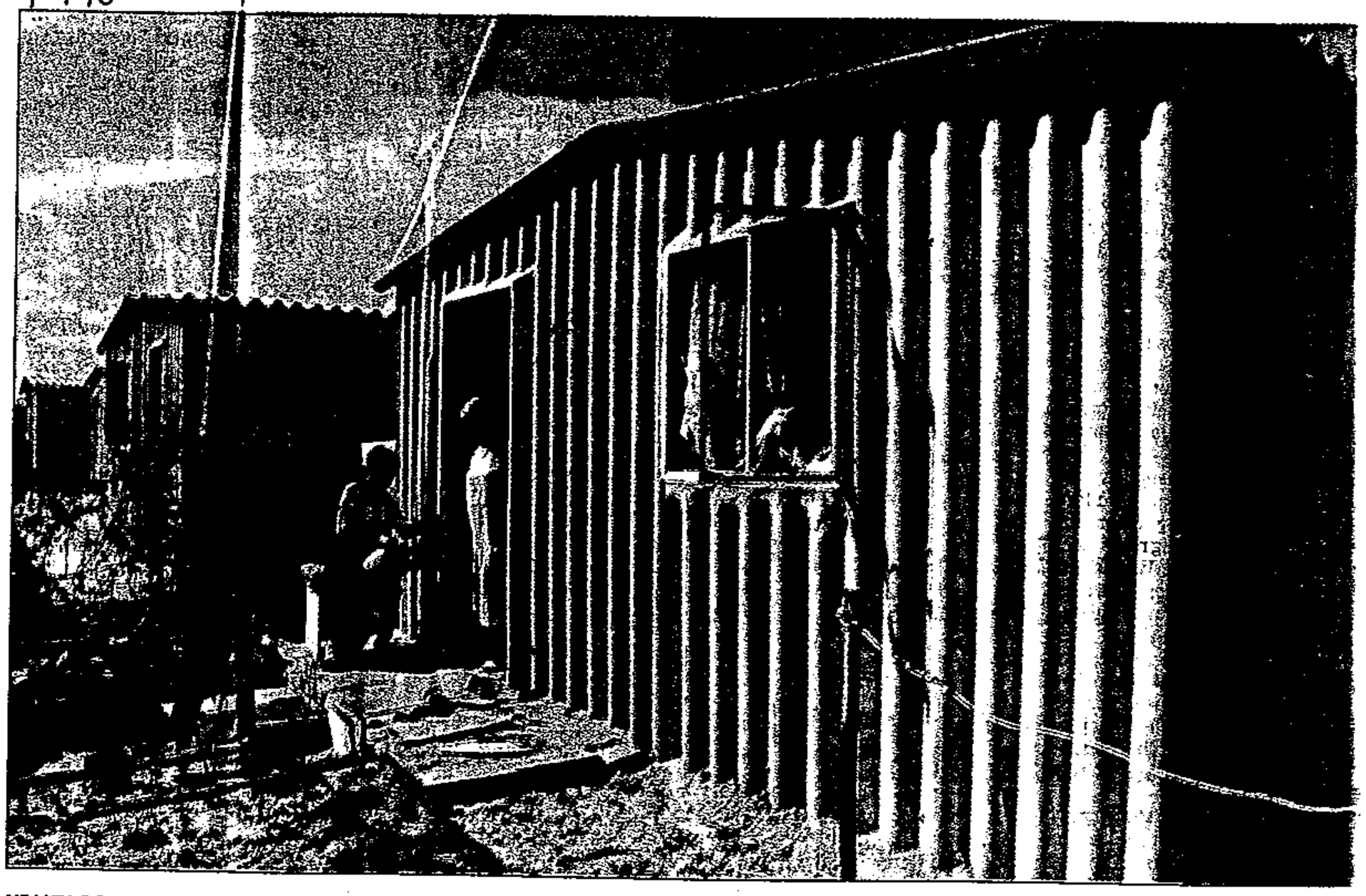
Felicity Tromp, Mrs Poeler's daughter, said: "A woman threw a glass against her wall and then there was just a hole in the wall."

Mrs Poeler said she coughed constantly and that her daughter's youngest child suffered from a tight chest.

Mrs Poeler said: "But it's probably from the cold."

Sarita Botis, speaking for the provincial housing department, said: "Although the houses are completely safe to live in, communities where these houses are built are against the use of any type of prefabricated housing.

"There is a perception that any building method other than the conventional brick or cement block method is inferior."



HEALTH CONCERN: Caroline Poeler, Felicity Tromp and her baby, in their house of asbestos-cement

Picture: BRENTON GEACH

6

Prince of the

dodgy deal

ST 6/9/98 (56)

Parks board boss in trouble for gambling with nation's assets

JUSTIN ARENSTEIN

THIS is Alan Gray — the Mpumalanga Parks Board chief who has gambled the future of some of South Africa's most priceless natural treasures in a series of dodgy deals totalling billions of rands.

After the Sunday Times revealed his latest scheme — which sought to raise R340-million by issuing promissory notes and putting the Blyde River Canyon and four game reserves at risk — Gray's offices were raided by the Heath commission this week and another R500-million promissory note was uncovered.

The Sunday Times has since discovered that Gray gambled the same game parks and resorts in similar schemes on at least three previous occasions. All the schemes have been branded illegal by the Reserve Bank and Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, and Gray's boss, Mpumalanga Premier Mathews Phosa, has called the parks board chief a political embarrassment.

Despite this, Gray remains on in his R48 000 a month job. He is no stranger to controversy.

As financial director of the KaNgwane Parks Corporation in the early '90s, Gray was part of a team which introduced an aggressively marketed management company called Club Africa to board members as potential managers for Bongani Lodge, near Nelspruit.

The contract ran into trouble within two months, however, when Club Africa took advantage of a loophole in its contract and began marketing the state-owned reserve as a time-share resort.

It eventually cost the KaNgwane Parks Corporation more than R1,5-million in legal fees and settlement payments to cancel the contract.

Mpumalanga paid an additional R900 000 earlier this year to sort out administrative bungles linked to the deal and lost another R470 000 rental with Bongani's new operator because of more contractual loopholes.

Gray then set up a similar exclusive commercialisation scheme with Footsteps cc at Mpumalanga's flagship game park, Songimvelo.

The contract's terms were kept secret but the Auditor-General, Henri Kluever, noted in a special report earlier this year that the parks board was eventually forced to buy Footsteps out of its own joint-venture company for R1,6-million.

Two years ago Gray tried to secretly award a R12,5-billion monopoly on Pilgrim's Rest, the Blyde River Canyon and five of the province's flagship reserves to a Dubai-based company, Dolphin, for 50 years.

It cost the Mpumalanga government more than R1,9-million to set up the Dolphin deal and host a lavish function to introduce the company to the province's movers and shakers.

Part of the costs went towards hiring Lowveld Helicopter Services and Air Excellence to fly Dolphin's executives around the province on sightseeing trips.

Gray owned large stakes in both companies at the time. He was paid R1,2-million by the parks board for the services rendered by these companies. The contracts weren't tendered for.

Gray was also a director of a company called Travel Today when it received R520 000 from the parks board for handling the board's travel arrangements.

In addition, parks board staff had been contractually obliged to take out membership with medical rescue company, Life Crisis, in which he held a stake.

He said this week that he had resigned most of his posts since the media had revealed his possible conflicts of interest and had also declared his interests.

Phosa this week ordered the parks board's board of directors to investigate whether Gray was still fit to head the parastatal.

"Gray has been the centre of a litany of unhappy incidents and enough is now enough," Phosa said. "People want to sleep peacefully in this province so I've asked the board to probe his role in the Dolphin deal, with discredited consultants, nepotism charges and a number of unmandated overseas trips."

Mpumalanga's finance MEC, Jacques Modipane, has gone even further. He has accused Gray of forging his signature on promissory notes and of trying to defraud the province.

Gray's empire appears finally to be crumbling following the seizure of the secret and illegal promissory note worth R500-million this week — the fifth promissory note issued by him in the past year.

The promissory notes, which irrevocably and unconditionally bind the parks board's assets as collateral, are worth a combined total of R1,3-billion.

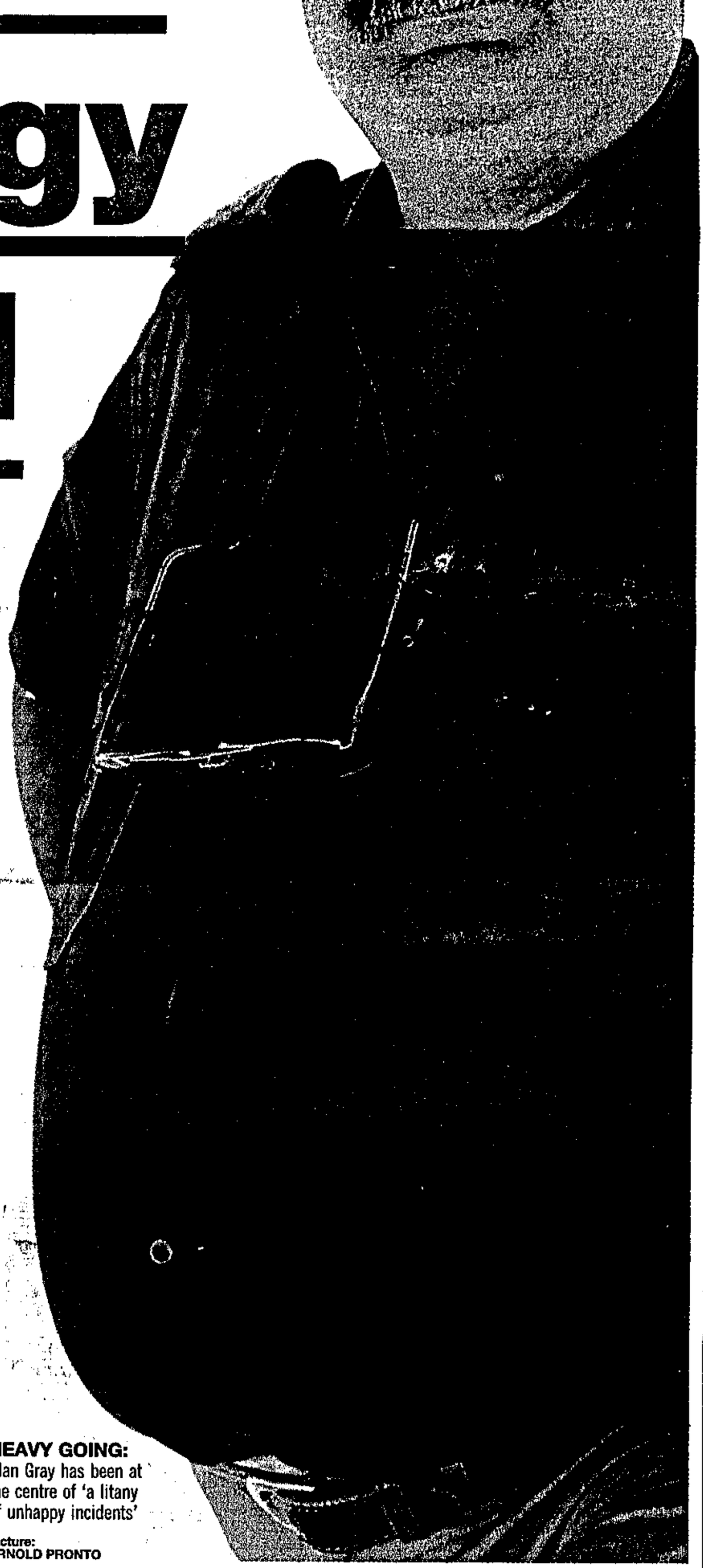
The R500-million promissory note was found in a secretary's safe and doesn't appear to have been issued to anyone yet. An earlier R500-million promissory note made out to Pacific Bullion International was issued in December, but it was cancelled.

Judge William Heath [illegible] latest promissory notes so easy to negotiate that they could be cashed at their face value of R340-million.

"If the bearer was unaware that they had been drawn up without authorisation, they could legally force the board to pay up or face having its assets and game parks sold off," said Heath.

Finance Minister Manuel yesterday branded Gray's actions as "illegal" and said the parks board boss had never obtained state treasury, Reserve Bank, national loan co-ordinating committee or ministerial approval before issuing the promissory notes.

He also said that the scheme fell foul of the Borrowing Powers of Provinces Act and contravened various foreign exchange regulations.



HEAVY GOING: Alan Gray has been at the centre of 'a litany of unhappy incidents'

Picture: ARNOLD PRONTO

The Star ... Monday September 7 1998

Threat to sue parks board for millions

(76)

Star 7/9/98

Fenetic, which holds R340-m promissory notes, says it has done nothing wrong

By Justin Arenstein
African Eye News Service

The Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) could face a multimillion-rand damages case even if it succeeds in reversing or cancelling an illegal R340-million offshore loan deal which has endangered the province's game parks.

Financial broker Fenetic Investments, which holds the three illegal promissory notes issued by MPB chief executive Alan Gray, warned at the weekend that it had done nothing illegal and would sue for lost profits and its expenses.

A probe by Judge Willem Heath was launched last month after the MPB illegally issued the three promissory notes worth R340-million to Fenetic without getting approval from Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, the Reserve Bank, the state treasury or the national loans co-ordinating committee.

The promissory notes use MPB's assets as irrevocable and unconditional security for a one-year loan from Fenetic and endanger the future of the region's game parks and Blyde River Canyon.

Fenetic's directors, all in New York at the weekend, refuse to hand over the notes until they are convinced they were worthless. Their South African attorney, Tony Mostert, said his clients would not return until Judge Heath had convinced him that Gray acted illegally and without authorisation.

"If the judge can convince me of that, then my clients will dissociate themselves from the deal and will return the notes. They will, however, launch a very large damages case against Mpumalanga.

"They insist they haven't done anything wrong and will sue for loss of profits and for their very considerable expenses to date," Mostert said.

Fenetic's chief executive Moshe Regenstreich and the company's other directors have been in the US for a month, setting up the deal with various American banks.

Fenetic Investments has been investigated by the National Intelligence Agency, Reserve Bank, Heath special investigative unit and the police's commercial crime unit during its six-month history.

It is also facing a R7-million breach of contract lawsuit for a gold deal that went wrong, and its directors are involved in a string of other legal suits.

Reserve Bank deputy governor James Cross has confirmed that his staff visited Fenetic's Sandton offices and ordered them to halt all foreign exchange transactions after it was found that the company was handling large currency deals without a forex licence.

The Star ... Tuesday September 8 1998

Summons threat in parks board dispute

Star 8/9/98 (56)

Investigators probing Mpumalanga deal

demand return of promissory notes

AFRICAN EYE NEWS SERVICE
Nelspruit

The Heath special investigative unit warned yesterday that it would issue legal summons demanding the immediate surrender of three illegal promissory notes worth R340-million that are being held by a financial broker in New York City.

The probe under Judge Willem Heath concerns the conduct of Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) chief executive officer Alan Gray in illegally issuing the three promissory notes, worth $50-million, in return for a one-year R340-million loan to the cash-strapped parastatal.

The unit's investigation manager, Jonathan Dutton, said the unit may be forced to issue a Section 5(2)b summons to Fenetic Investments to get the promissory notes handed over to South African authorities.

"Whether they think the deal was kosher or not, the promissory notes belong to the Government," said Dutton.

He said the unit had also refused an offer by Fenetic Investments to conduct forensic tests on the notes to determine whether the signature of Mpumalanga Finance MEC Jacques Modipane was authentic.

Both Minister of Finance Trevor Manuel and Modipane have branded the deal illegal because Gray had failed to get approval from the Reserve Bank, the State Treasury, the National Loan Co-ordinating Committee and Finance Ministry in terms of the Borrowing Powers of Provinces Act.

Modipane has accused Gray of fraudulently attaching his signature and official stamp to the promissory notes to imply government approval.

Fenetic Investments adamant transaction is legal

Tony Mostert, legal advisor for Fenetic Investments, said his client had refused to hand over the promissory notes to investigators because financial brokers insisted the deal was legal.

Mostert has indicated that if the Heath investigators found the deal to be illegal, Fenetic Investments directors would sue the MPB for millions of rands in lost commission and damages.

'Gray scanned boss's signature onto report'

Star 9/9/98 (56)

If Mpumalanga Parks Board chief can do it once, there is nothing to prevent him doing it again, says finance MEC

SAPA
Nelspruit

Mpumalanga's Parks Board chief Alan Gray forged the signature of its chairperson in the past and could therefore have forged politicians' signatures of approval for its illegal R340-million offshore loan deal, provincial Finance MEC Jacques Modipane said yesterday.

Modipane produced the board's 1996 annual report at a news conference yesterday. He said Gray had electronically scanned and reproduced board chairperson Patrick Maduna's signature on the report without permission or consultation.

The same method could have been used to attach a copy of Modipane's signature to the back of three illegal promissory notes Gray issued to Fenetic Investments in July.

"If Gray can (forge signatures) once, there is nothing to prevent him from doing it again. I never signed any of the promissory notes issued by Gray and therefore believe that my signature must have been forged by someone in the parks board," Modipane said.

The notes, meant to serve as security for a R340-million loan to the board, are with Fenetic's directors in New York.

Modipane said Gray and one of his communication department officials scanned Maduna's signature for a report to the provincial legislature – giving a glowing picture of the board's activities – without asking Maduna's permission or giving him a copy of the report. Gray and the official later wrote letters of apology to Maduna.

Modipane could not explain to journalists how a scanned computer printout would pass for an original signature. He said the promissory notes would be sent for forensic tests when they were returned to SA.

Modipane said he had been alerted to irregular financing schemes as early as February, when a broker warned him about Gray's activities.

Gray was not available for comment.

the defence force were implicated in the theft.

the Corruption Act as a criminal offence

Mpumalanga deal was 'legal' – report

The controversial deal between the Mpumalanga Parks Board and American-controlled Fenetic Investments was approved by the board, the *Lowvelder* newspaper reported in Nelspruit.

The paper said it had conducted its own, in-depth investigation of the deal and had discovered that board chairman Francis Legodi was at a number of board meetings where possible investment deals were discussed.

Legodi has publicly denied knowledge of the deal and the glare of accusation has fallen on the parks board's chief executive officer, Alan Gray.

According to the *Lowvelder*, a report by one of the country's most reputable law firms, Moss-Morris Incorporated, confirmed that the deal between the MPB and Fenetic was "legal".

The report was submitted by Moss-Morris's chairman, A Tugendhaft, who found that the MPB acted "within the parameters" of the Parks Board Act in negotiations with Fenetic.

The act gives the board wide powers to "initiate, plan, finance, promote or render assistance" to any project for the "exploitation, development or utilisation of any natural resources", reported the *Lowvelder*.

According to the Moss-Morris report, the deal did not constitute borrowing or raising of money by way of a loan to the MPB as contemplated by the act.

Moss-Morris also found the deal did not contravene the exchange control regulations which restrict payments to individuals or companies abroad, because the promissory notes were made in favour of Fenetic, a South African-registered company.

The Moss-Morris report was presented to the Parks Board and to the Heath special investigation unit yesterday.

The Heath probe team investigated a number of aspects of the deal, including whether the promissory notes were signed by Finance MEC Jacques Modipane.

– Staff Reporter

Star 12/9/98

(56)

Parks chief suspended

ST 13/9/98 (56)

JUSTIN ARENSTEIN

MPUMALANGA's embattled parks chief, Alan Gray, lost a last-ditch bid to save his career on Friday despite a flurry of legal letters and frantic behind-the-scenes lobbying.

Mpumalanga's parks board recommended that Gray be suspended immediately pending the outcome of a disciplinary hearing into his handling of a series of offshore loan schemes totalling R1,3-billion. The most recent of the secretive schemes, all branded illegal by Minister of Finance Trevor Manuel, unconditionally bind the board's assets and the region's game parks to Fenetic Investments for one year in return for a R340-million loan.

Three promissory notes signed by Gray and allegedly kept secret from the board's directors and the parastatal's external auditors, KPMG, are being investigated by the Heath special investigative unit and the Reserve Bank.

Board chairman Francis Legodi confirmed that the directors had voted that Gray should be suspended.

Coastline worth R179bn a year — Jordan

(56)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

SOUTH AFRICA's coastline is estimated to be worth R179 billion a year in goods and services — 37% of the country's gross domestic product.

Minister of Environment Dr Pallo Jordan said yesterday that if we were to realise the economic opportunities of the coast, it was essential that we manage them wisely. This was a key point in the Green Paper on Coastal Policy launched yesterday.

"This Green Paper comes in the context of the government's attempts to legislate a comprehensive environmental management policy

"It is based on specialist studies and an unprecedented process of public participation. More than 1 000 people and 200 organisations were directly involved in the programme and more than 17 000 people receive programme newsletters."

The Green Paper proposed neither a "green" nor a "development-at-all-costs" policy, but aimed to promote development on a sustainable basis.

Key principles are:

- Coastal management should be co-ordinated, integrated and conducted in an open, inclusive manner.
- Coastal management should adopt a risk-averse and precautionary approach under conditions of uncertainty.
- The coast should be treated as an indivisible system.

CT 15/9/98

SA's coastal areas 'set to boost economy'

ARG 15/9/98

CHARLES PHAHLANE
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

South Africa's 3 000km coastline will form the centre of socio-economic activity in the coming years and the Coastal Policy Green Paper seeks to harness and manage these opportunities, says an environmental affairs ministry official.

The value of goods and services derived from the coast amounts to R179-billion, equivalent to 37% of GDP (gross domestic product).

At least 3,6 million South Africans were dependent on coastal food sources through subsistence activities, according to chairman of the Coastal Management Policy Programme Jeff McCarthy.

He said South Africa's slowness in recognising the importance of coastal environments was perhaps related to its economic and political history where the agricultural and mineral resources of the interior were central.

Professor McCarthy said: "The future, we believe, will be somewhat different.

"In common with the rest of the world, it is our coastal environments that are likely to become the theatres of more and more of the socio-economic action."

A study by the CMPP committee shows the green paper's aims include:

- Realising long-term economic developmental potential of coastlines.
- Implementing pollution control and waste management measures.
- Maintaining the productivity of coastal processes and ecosystems.

Environment Affairs Minister Dr Pallo Jordan said the green paper posed key questions about the way forward.

"It provides alternatives and solutions to the question of managing our coast in a manner that is both equitable and sustainable.

"It is a vital step towards integrated coastal management and towards sustainable coastal development."

Coastal policy green paper emphasises opportunities

BD 15/9/98

David Greybe (56)

CAPE TOWN — Government yesterday launched its coastal policy green paper, which proposes how to better manage SA's coastal economy.

The green paper is the culmination of an 18-month consultative process, involving more than 200 organisations. It proposes a new policy aimed at promoting economic and social development as opposed to a so-called "green" or "development-at-any-cost" policy.

Calling for increased investment in SA's 3 000km coast, the green paper argues that there are significant development opportunities along the coast if it is managed carefully.

A final coastal policy, is scheduled for next April.

Launching the green paper, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan said it would be virtually impossible to preserve the pristine beauty of SA's coast.

However, what had to be done was "to preserve the integrity of the coastal ecosystems on which so much of our country's economy depends".

Jeff McCarthy, chairman of the policy committee which oversaw the drafting process, said the R179bn annual value of coastal goods and services was equivalent to 37% of SA's annual gross domestic product.

"It is clear that the coast provides an important basis for economic development, poverty reduction and sustainable job creation in SA," McCarthy said. It was no wonder that eight of the current 10 spatial development initiatives were linked to the coast.

However, despite the enormous economic significance and potential of the coast, "until recently relatively little was known of our coastal environments", McCarthy said.

In common with international trends, SA's coastal environments would likely become "the theatres of more and more of the socio-economic action". A major purpose of the green paper was, therefore, to lay the groundwork for this "powerful trend".

The paper suggests three institutional models to follow for a new " equitable and sustainable" coastal management policy.

They are to either:

- Set up an independent coastal commission to, among others, provide, manage and police national coastal policy, standards and programmes. Provincial and regional offices would also be established, or;
- Maintain the department of environmental affairs and tourism as the lead agent, but strengthen existing structures. Provincial lead departments would be identified and also strengthened, or;
- Create "strategic alliances" between the lead agent (environmental affairs) "and either the department of water affairs and forestry, department of trade and industry or department of land affairs".

Happy family ... the parents of the 12 little wild dog puppies guard the lair that gives shelter and protection to their new litter.

Future of endangered African wild dogs looking brighter after big litter

(56)

Star 16/9/98

Even with the births, Africa's most threatened predator faces extinction

By Tony Carnie

The number of African wild dogs – a critically endangered species – in Zululand's Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park has doubled with the recent birth of a litter of 12 puppies.

The arrival of the litter is particularly good news, not just for the park, but also for a species which had reached the shadow of death's door because of human persecution, disease and a severe lack of living space.

With only 5 000 of these animals left in the world, the wild dog is in big trouble.

It is Africa's most endangered predator.

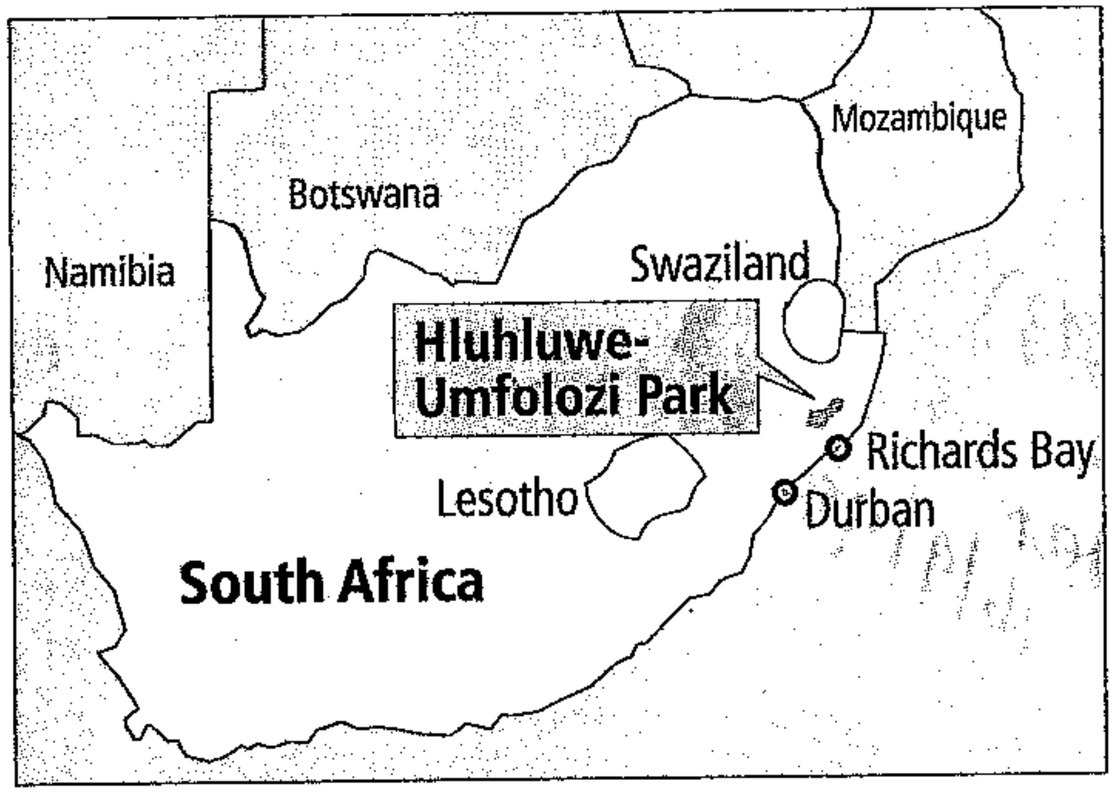
The recent births in the Umfolozi section of the park follow the introduction less than a year ago of two adult males and two females from the Kruger National Park and a private reserve in Mpumalanga.

Although more than 20 dogs were released into the park in the early 1980s, their numbers had dwindled to just six towards the end of last year.

Some had died and others had moved out of the park to establish new packs, while the small pack in Hluhluwe had not bred for nearly four years.

However, the Hluhluwe pack produced a small litter late last year and now the Umfolozi pack has gone ahead and produced a bumper litter.

Michael Somers, head of the Zululand wild dog project, said he was extremely heartened by the latest addition. However, he warned that the population could plummet if the pack came into contact with domestic dogs infected with rabies.



One of the new pups – the smallest in the litter – died two weeks ago but the remainder appear to be doing well.

They are being monitored closely by Somers and colleague Bongani Mthembu. The two are keeping tabs on the pack with the aid of collars and electronic tracking equipment.

With sponsorship from the Green Trust (Nedbank and the Worldwide Fund for Nature SA), Somers is spending three years studying the park's wild dog population.

This project is part of a wider regional initiative to help save the small but skilful predator from extinction.

Because of the shrinking numbers, researchers are hoping to organise a programme whereby individual dogs will be moved from park to park throughout the region and even the country. This will be carried out on a regular basis to ensure regular infusions of new genetic blood.

Earthlife demands details of Koeberg's double shutdown

(56) (56)

SHARKEY ISAACS, LINDSAY BARNES AND SAPA

ARG 16/9/98

The Council for Nuclear Safety is monitoring an investigation into faults which have resulted in the shutdown of both turbines at Koeberg nuclear power station.

This is the first time the power station has been forced to shut down both units simultaneously.

Eskom spokesman Peter Adams said there was "not the slightest danger" to anyone inside or outside the power station, and that the Council for Nuclear Safety was monitoring the investigation.

Earthlife spokesman Davin Chown expressed concern that Cape Town residents could be in danger in spite of the assurances from Eskom.

Calling on Eskom to release details of the "technical faults" that affected the turbines, Mr Chown said: "People cannot be sure safety measures were strictly adhered to unless Eskom is more specific about what actually happened."

Brian Statham, national energy manager for Eskom, said yesterday that the shutdown of two units was done under standard safety procedures.

"It is perfectly safe, and there is no question of meltdown or anything like that," he said.

The first fault in unit two occurred on Sunday morning during routine testing, said Mr Adams. An "unexpected vibration" was found and the cause was still being investigated.

Unit one tripped at 3am yesterday because of a fault unrelated to the fault in unit two, while technicians and engineers were still struggling to repair the first turbine.

There had been no problems with either nuclear reactor during the close-down, Mr Adams said.

The plant should be up and running "within a day or two", he said.

Replacement power to the Western Cape is currently being supplied from conventional, coal-fired generators and hydro-powered units in the north, he said.

The rerouting of power to the Western Cape from the national grid - a network of high-voltage power lines covering the country and connecting all the power stations in the country - meant a shutdown of power to parts of the Western and Eastern Cape for an hour yesterday.

Two provincial pump-storage hydro turbines at Palmiet and Steenbras dams as well as the Peninsula's only remaining conventional power station at Athlone also had to tap into the grid to generate additional power during peak demand.

New laws give fishermen back their old rights

(56) ARG 16/9/98

PETER GOOSEN
ANGLING CORRESPONDENT

Recreational and subsistence fishermen will be allowed to catch four perlemoen or crayfish every day in terms of regulations published this week. This will give fishermen back their rights.

Halfway through last season, Environment Minister Pallo Jordan dealt sport fishermen a blow by limiting their fishing to weekends. At the same time, "subsistence licences" were issued to subsistence fishermen allowing them to sell their catch for the first time.

Then the Fishermen's Rights Action Group was formed to fight the new regulations and it took Dr Jordan to the High Court, winning a reprieve until the end of last season.

The season ended in November for perlemoen and December for crayfish.

The new season for perlemoen opens on December 16 and closes on April 16, and for crayfish on November 15 and closes on May 1.

Now, the eagerly awaited new regulations have reverted to the old status quo.

But there are still vital unanswered questions.

The cost of the licences for the new season has not yet been announced.

And it has not been announced whether subsistence fishermen will be allowed to sell their catch – sport fishermen have never been allowed to sell theirs.

The subsistence permit system last season was not a success in all areas, although it worked well on the False Bay coast. In other areas, some of the permits were never collected by the successful applicants.

Fishermen told me that one of the main reasons it failed in some places was that some subsistence fishermen relied on the boats and equipment of recreational fishermen to catch their crayfish. Many of them could not afford their own equipment.

Another major concession in the new regulations is that divers will be able to transport 20 crayfish or perlemoen in a vehicle instead of 16 as previously, provided each person in the vehicle has a licence. This means, for instance, that five divers travelling in a minibus will each be able to transport his or her own catch.

Any hiccups in the new rules will be covered because the old and new regulations will run in tandem for six months.

Chairman of the action group Herman Venter said the groups had had a tough time in the past few months fighting for the rights and interests of more than 75 000 recreational and subsistence fishermen.

"Luckily, we had a good friend and support in provincial minister Mark Wiley who is just as interested in the conservation and utilisation of our marine resources."

Alex Papayanni, public relations officer for Dive Africa, the diving union, said it was pleasing to see that commonsense had prevailed at last.

As a result of the department's decision, all divers would be asked to obey the regulations to the letter.

Nuclear power station's shutdown 'perfectly safe' and it should be up and running soon

(56) Star 17/9/98

Staff Reporters and Sapa

The Council for Nuclear Safety is monitoring the investigation of the faults which caused the shutdown of both turbines at Koeberg nuclear power station.

This is the first time in the history of the Western Cape power station that both units have been shut down simultaneously.

Eskom spokesperson Peter Adams said there was "not the slightest danger" to anyone inside or outside the power station, and that the Council for Nuclear Safety was monitoring the investigation.

Earthlife spokesperson Davin Chown expressed concern that Cape Town residents were in danger despite assurances from Eskom that the shutdown posed no danger.

Calling on Eskom to release details of the "technical faults" that affected the turbines, Chown said: "People cannot be sure safety measures were strictly adhered to unless Eskom is more specific about what actually happened."

Brian Statham, national energy manager for Eskom, said the shutdown of two units was done under standard safety procedures. "It's perfectly safe, and there is no question of meltdown or anything like that."

The first fault in unit 2 occurred on Sunday morning during routine testing, said Adams. An "unexpected vibration" was found and the cause was still being investigated, he said yesterday.

Unit 1 tripped at 3am on Tuesday due to a turbine fault unrelated to the fault in unit 2, while technicians and engineers were still struggling to repair the first turbine.

There had been no problems on either nuclear reactors in the closing down, Adams said. The plant should be up and running "within a day or two", he said.

Replacement power to the Western Cape is currently being supplied from conventional, coal-fired generators and hydro-powered units in the north, said Statham.

The rerouting of power to the Western Cape from the national grid – a network of high-voltage powerlines covering the country and connecting all the power stations in Mpumalanga with Koeberg and the rest of the country – meant a shutdown of power to parts of the Western and Eastern Cape for an hour yesterday.

Two provincial pump-storage hydro turbines at Palmiet and Steenbras dams as well as the Peninsula's only remaining conventional power station at Athlone also had to tap into the grid to generate additional power during peak demand. Greater Cape Town is estimated to use more than 20 000 megawatts daily.

The turbines produce parallel streams of power for the national grid.

Environmentalists concerned over Koeberg stoppage

(56) BD 17/9/98

CAPE TOWN — Earthlife Africa called on Eskom yesterday to release details of the technical problems which led to the shutdown of Koeberg nuclear power station.

Earthlife spokesman Davin Chown said they were concerned that Cape Town residents were in danger despite assurances from Eskom that the shutdown posed no danger.

"People cannot be sure safety measures were strictly adhered to unless Eskom is more specific about what actually happened," Chown said.

Eskom national energy manager, Brian Statham said on Tuesday that the shutdown of two units, within 48 hours of each other, was done under standard safety procedures. "It is perfectly safe, and there is no question of meltdown or anything like that," he said.

The breakdown of the Koeberg turbines was compounded by another breakdown at a coal-powered station at Tutuka, Mpumalanga, which also fed the Western and Eastern Cape. He said engineers and technicians were struggling, as it was not known when the two turbines would be back on stream.

At the Koeberg station the first fault in unit number one occurred on Sunday and the second in unit number two was discovered on Tuesday morning, while technicians and engineers were still struggling to repair the first turbine.

It was the first time in the history of the power station that both units were shut down simultaneously. — Sapa.

Parks Board recommendations for Gray rejected

BD 18/9/98 (56)

Kevin O'Grady

A RECOMMENDATION by Mpumalanga Parks Board directors of steps that should be taken against board CEO Alan Gray had been rejected as "not strong enough", premier Mathews Phosa said yesterday.

Gray's future as CEO hangs in the balance following allegations that he illegally issued three promissory notes to financial brokerage Fenetic Investments. The notes put up several of the province's parks as security in return for a one-year R340m loan.

This is the second time a decision on Gray's future has been delayed. An earlier recommendation was sent back by environmental affairs MEC Fish Mahlalela on technical grounds because it was not stated clearly in the report that it had been considered and adopted by the board's directors.

The first report recommended that Gray be suspended with immediate effect pending the outcome of a disciplinary inquiry into several aspects of his conduct.

Phosa said yesterday that he met Mahlalela on Wednesday night to discuss the matter.

It was agreed that Mahlalela, who has ultimate responsibility for deciding Gray's future, would make a recommendation to the provincial cabinet at its next meeting next Wednesday and an announcement made thereafter.

Phosa said he was "not entirely satisfied" with the board's recommendations as presented to him by Mahlalela.

The proposed measures were "not strong enough and ... more severe and immediate measures should be considered against Gray and certain members of the board. In this regard, a firm proposal will be placed before the cabinet for immediate implementation".

Phosa's spokesman Oupa Pilane said the provincial government still had no evidence that finance MEC Jacques Modipane authorised the promissory notes, as claimed by Gray. Modipane has alleged Gray fraudulently attached his signature to documents to imply government approval of the deal.

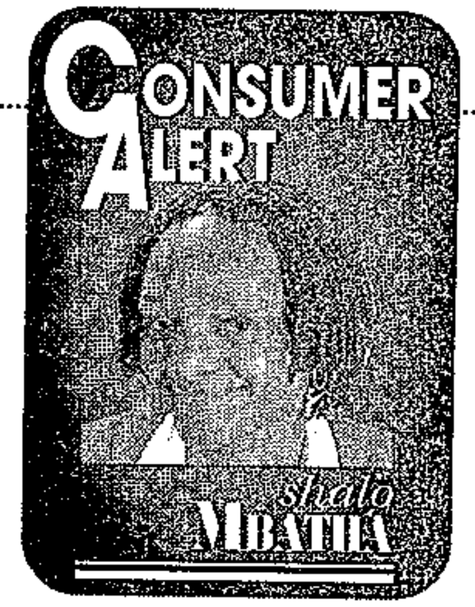
Pilane said Phosa was still waiting to receive the documents, which Gray claimed could prove Modipane's involvement. Phosa had asked Gray for the documents about three weeks ago.

Pollution levels are down

(56)

Efforts are paying off, but there's still a long way to go before our air is safe to breathe

Star 19/9/98



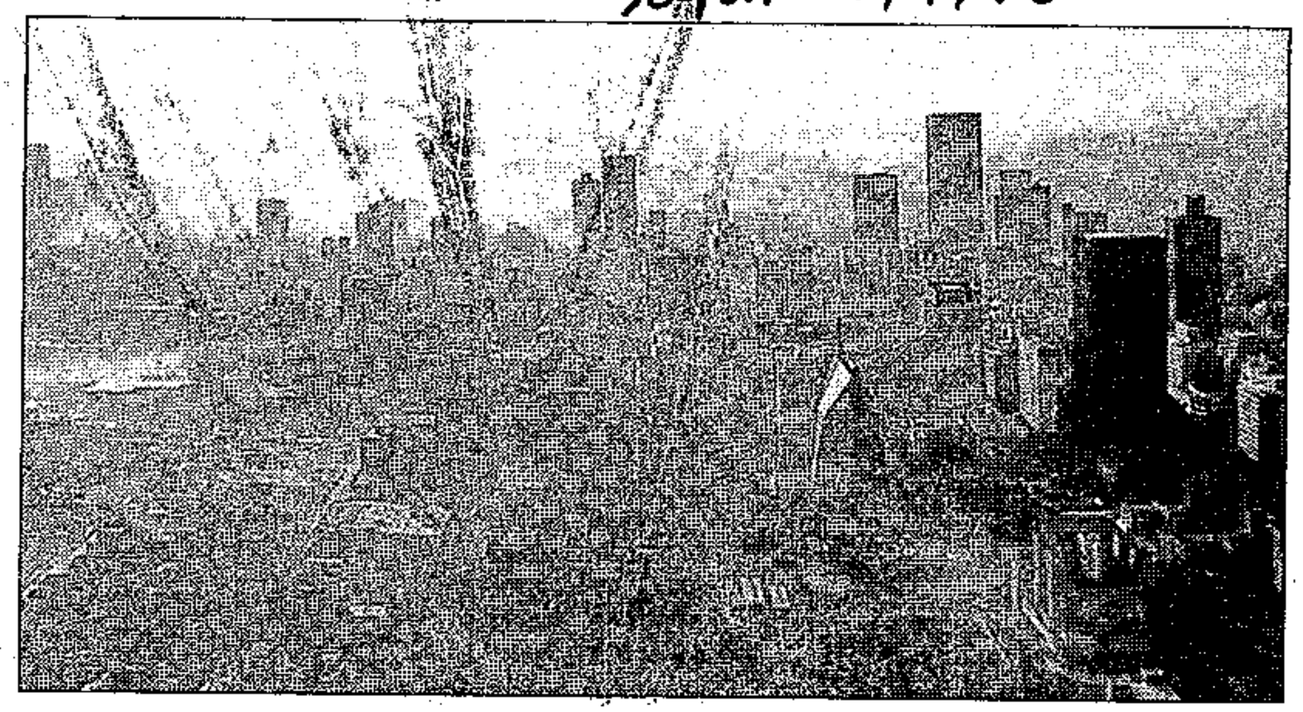
Every winter we are confronted by shocking statistics of high pollution all over the country, especially in the industrial heartland, Gauteng, but the government does not seem to regard this situation as urgent.

About 2 000 children die countrywide annually because of respiratory infections caused by airborne pollution, making it the sixth largest killer of children under the age of 4.

Coal consists of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen and carbon monoxide, and the country burns 3 million tons of the stuff a year. One of the most harmful emissions from coal is lead, which can cause hyperactivity, retarded growth and infected blood in children.

Gauteng ranks as one of world's worst polluted areas. We are in the same league as Bangkok, Mexico City, Los Angeles, Beijing and Sao Paulo.

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism as well as other government departments are only at the stage of setting up structures to deal with the situation.



SMOGGY JOHANNESBURG: Gauteng and the Vaal region ranks as one of the world's worst polluted areas

Chief air pollution officer Martin Lloyd says that "by international standards we are not doing too badly".

The level of pollution, especially in winter when it is at its worst, has dropped dramatically in the past few years. More and more people are using electricity, and less coal, for cooking and heating.

The Departments of Mineral and Energy Affairs and of Housing, as well as Eskom, have embarked on a project to develop smokeless fuel and coal.

"Devolitised" coal and paper-based products have been introduced in a Free State pilot project. Despite complaints that these products are not warm enough for the sub-zero temperatures found during a Free State winter, the results were spectacular: the pollution level halved.

Lead levels have also come down, according to Lloyd, because some people are using unleaded petrol. He applauds Sasol's attempt to introduce alcohol in petrol. However, a recent study found that township children contained levels of lead in their bloodstream that were higher than what would be acceptable in developed countries.

The acceptable level of pollution worldwide is 35 parts per million, while the Free State has levels of between 300 and 1 000 parts per million, the biggest culprits being braziers, paraffin lamps and mine dumps.

Both the provincial and national government are still in the process of designing rules and regulations to govern air pollution. Air monitoring takes place in 60 cities and towns around the country. But the results remain largely ignored because the Environmental Affairs Department does not have enough money or staff to prosecute offenders.

Esphina Rokutu from the Mineral and Energy Policy Centre says: "The bill in Parliament seeks to make polluters pay, and once it becomes an act, it will be enforced by all tiers of government.

"But before that happens, the guarding against polluters ought to be done by the communities themselves. A sick environment affects the health of the population, performance of children at school and the productivity of workers."

■ **TIPS:** A house with an insulated ceiling uses less heat in winter and is cool in summer. Companies should invest in energy-saving buildings.

Avoid sick buildings with poor ventilation because they result in low productivity.

Despite the acclaimed worker-friendly open-plan offices, they can be problematic.

The recommended winter temperature is 20/22 degrees, for summer 22/26 degrees and the humidity level at 40/60 degrees.

Politicians linked to parks chief

ST 20/9/98 (56)

JUSTIN ARENSTEIN

TWO of Mpumalanga's most controversial MECs and South Africa's ambassador to Mozambique bought four helicopters in a top-secret deal with the province's prince of dodgy deals, embattled parks board chief Alan Gray.

Finance MEC Jacques Modipane and his former environmental affairs counterpart, David Mkhwanazi, are also accused of authorising a number of Gray's R1,3-billion offshore-loan deals, being probed by the Heath special investigative unit and the Reserve Bank.

The deals, first revealed by the Sunday Times four weeks ago, used the province's game parks as collateral without the necessary approval.

Despite initial denials of any links between Gray and the politicians, the Sunday Times has confirmed that Gray, Modipane, Mkhwanazi, ambassador Mangisi Zitha and finance department head Sam Cronje were all partners in a secret 1996 helicopter partnership called Air Excellence Partnership.

All four helicopter partnerships are built around explicit secrecy clauses, and appear to have been designed to lease luxury helicopters to the government. The contracts have been branded irregular by the Auditor-General.

The deal was initiated by Gray and is still being operated by his friend and the SA partner of the Dolphin Group, Sean McMurray.

Gray has subsequently been asked to testify at an ANC disciplinary hearing on Wednesday into Modipane and Mkhwanazi's role in the deal and on the use of R9-million of state funds as a "slush fund" by the politicians to award jobs or irregular contracts to relatives and other supporters.

The politicians will also be grilled after forensic experts cast doubt on Modipane's insistence that his signature on promissory notes for the loan deal were fraudulent, and after a covering letter from Mkhwanazi authorising one of the R500-million notes came to light this week.

Modipane, Mkhwanazi and Cronje confirmed their membership in the Air Excellence partnership but said they opted out in 1997.

National Assembly adopts new environmental management bill

BD 22/9/98 (56)

David Greybe

CAPE TOWN — New laws on clean air, integrated pollution and waste management, protected areas and biodiversity conservation, and coastal zone management were being prepared and would be ready after next year's election, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan told Parliament yesterday.

He was speaking in the National Assembly during the second reading on the National Environmental Management Bill. The bill was unanimously adopted.

"Our environmental laws and other laws relating to our management of the environment are fragmented," Jordan said. "The task of reviewing, integrating, consolidating and weeding out the undesirable is an ongoing process."

The bill made important advances in managing "the presently fragmented performance of environmental functions among various government departments".

The bill, based on the constitutional principle of co-operative government, assigns the role of lead agent to the environmental affairs and tourism department.

Democratic Party (DP) MP Mike Ellis said the bill in its final form was "a pale shadow of the public participation process" initiated in 1995. Some excellent and innovative proposals such as stricter penalties for polluters and a mandatory advisory clause involving stakeholders had "almost mysteriously disappeared". However, the bill had its good points, and the DP supported it, he said.

Jordan conceded the bill contained "some compromises", but said some of the proposals excluded might be included in the various pieces of legislation being prepared for after the elections.

Central to the bill is the establishment of a committee for environmental co-ordination, whose job it will be to harmonise the work of departments on environmental issues, and co-ordinate environmental management plans at provincial and local levels.

African National Congress MP Sue van der Merwe said the committee was central to the successful implementation of the bill.

The Star ... Wednesday September 23 1998

Parks board chief and directors get the boot

Star 23/9/98 (56)

Mpumalanga government moves to restore good governance

SAPA
Nelspruit

The Mpumalanga government has ordered its parks board chief Alan Gray, who allegedly issued six illegal promissory notes worth R1,3-billion in return for offshore loans, to resign in the interests of good governance.

Gray, who reportedly accepted the order early yesterday, was promised a sizeable severance package and would not be subjected to a disciplinary hearing.

The government would not disclose the amount of the package.

Gray is being investigated by the Heath special investigative unit for issuing the promissory notes to financial brokers in return for offshore loans of between R340-million and R500-million.

The notes, branded as illegal by Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, posted parks board assets as irrevocable and unconditional security for the loans.

Press reports at the weekend said he set up a partnership with Finance MEC Jacques Modipane, Environment MEC David Mkhwanazi and South Africa's ambassador to Mozambique, Mangisi Zitha, to buy a helicopter. The helicopter was reportedly leased to one of Gray's companies, which was criticised in a recent special report by the auditor-general for doing business with the Mpumalanga Parks Board.

Also yesterday, Mpumalanga Environmental Affairs MEC Fish Mahlalela said he had dismissed the MPB's board of directors, and was going to campaign for the dissolution of the parastatal and its amalgamation with the Mpumalanga Tourism Authority.

Mahlalela said he had been prompted to dismiss the MPB's board after discovering that detailed board minutes contradicted their insistence that board members were not properly informed about Gray's promissory notes.

He said the minutes revealed that the board had decided in January to keep the scheme secret from Mkhwanazi.

A call for nominations for a new board would be made soon.

He refused to elaborate on allegations that Premier Mathews Phosa and other politicians had interfered with the board. "Make your own judgment, I cannot comment," he said.

CAPE TIMES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1998 ★

PENINSULA PARK A STEP CLOSER

Govt gives 700ha to parks board

(56)

CT 23/9/98

THE SA NATIONAL PARKS BOARD is still negotiating with the SANDF to include a large chunk of conservation-worthy land in the Cape Peninsula National Park. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THE Cape Peninsula National Park came one step closer yesterday to becoming a reality when the government handed over 700ha of conservation land to the SA National Parks Board for inclusion in the future park.

This includes the Groote Schuur estate from Devils Peak to Newlands forest, including Rhodes Memorial and the old zoo site.

Other land parcels include the Apostle Battery above Llandudno, most of the Sentinel at Hout Bay, the rocky beach in front of Misty Cliffs, 25ha of sensitive wetland and dunes at Scarborough and over 100ha in the Redhill area, a remote bit of land in the centre of the southern peninsula.

Public Works Minister Jeff Radebe, who handed the land to the parks board yesterday, said effective management of the peninsula's botanical and scenic richness had been hampered in the past as it had been managed by 14 different authorities.

With the parks board as the single controlling authority, this was changing. Effective management could only take place when there was integrated planning, which the formation of the Cape Peninsula Park would put into practice.

"I want to emphasise that the land handed over today to SA National Parks is for conservation purposes only and the standard reversion clauses will be effective should the land be utilised for any purpose other than that designated," Radebe said.

He said the hand-over of land brought the Cape Peninsula's mountain chain, from Table Mountain to Cape Point, one step closer to being nominated next year as a World Heritage Site.

"Undoubtedly the achievement of World Heritage Site status will be a tremendous boost for conservation. It will also be a welcome injection for the economy of the Western Cape," Radebe said.

The other big pieces of land that were handed over to the parks board earlier this year were from local authorities and included Table Mountain, Silvermine and the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve.

David Daitz, who heads the parks board team, said he was delighted with the handover. So far 1 600ha of land had been given to the parks board for the future park. The only major chunk of conservation-worthy state land that had not yet been handed over to the parks board was that owned by the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), including 700ha in Klawer Valley above Simon's Town. Daitz said negotiations with the SANDF were under way.

"The future of Safcol's Tokai and Celia forests, 770 ha, is also not yet certain. We're negotiating with Safcol," he said.

Inclusion would not mean Celia and Tokai would be discontinued as plantations, apart from a small portion of about 70ha, he said.

About 20% of the land which the parks board would like to include in the park is privately owned. This amounted to about 5 200ha.

Land transfer boosts Cape Peninsula Park

World Heritage status sought

(56) ARG 23/9/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Consolidation plans for the new Cape Peninsula National Park have been given a significant boost by the transfer of more than 750ha of land from the Department of Public Works.

It includes the Groote Schuur Estate and Rhodes Memorial with their huge tourism potential; most of the famous Sentinel rocky outcrop and the historic West Fort at Hout Bay dating back to the early Dutch settlement; the rocky beach area at Misty Cliffs near Scarborough; and 25ha of extremely valuable wetlands and sand dunes at Scarborough.

Also, the government has confirmed that the park will be nominated for World Heritage Site status next year.

The land transfer, announced by Public Works Minister Jeff Radebe at a ceremony at Rhodes Memorial yesterday, does not include some 300ha of high-value conservation land on the Karbonkelberg between Hout Bay and Sandy Bay, but officials expect this to be added soon.

And the national park will be further enhanced in the near future by the transfer of Peninsula land formerly controlled by Cape Nature Conservation, including Cecilia Forest.

Western Cape Environment Minister Mark Wiley told the Cape Argus that all the province's required approvals for the transfer of this land had been met.

"Now it's just a question of getting the concurrence of SA National Parks. It will happen soon," he said.

Mr Radebe said the government's goal was to ensure the conservation of South Africa's natural beauty and living heritage for future generations.

Only four of the 26 land parcels proposed for transfer to the park had some limited development potential, and these were being further evaluated.

Mr Radebe said: "Undoubtedly, the achievement of World Heritage Site status in 1999 will indeed be a tremendous boost for conservation in this province.

"It will also be a welcomed injection for the economy of the Western Cape, and will add value to initiatives currently underway to maximise the potential of the tourism industry in job creation."

Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan also welcomed the transfer of state land to the new park, which he described as "unique, not only in South Africa but in the world".

CAPE ARGUS, **FRIDAY**, SEPTEMBER 25, 1998

Let's all play a role in fire protection

Call for 'proper management'

(56)

ARG 25/9/98

The proper management of the Cape's mountains – including fire-protection measures – is an important social, economic and environmental investment, says conservationist Christo Marais.

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Mr Marais, a senior Cape Nature Conservation official who manages the "Working for Water" programme in the Western Cape on behalf of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, was adding his voice to the debate on the cause of the devastating fires which have swept the southern Cape this year.

Mr Marais also said that the broader community had to accept some responsibility for effective fire protection measures – especially property-owners with homes bordering the fire-prone areas of the mountainside.

Mr Marais agreed with wildfire specialist and forestry consultant Neels de Ronde of Bredasdorp, as quoted in the Cape Argus recently, that fire management services had been neglected in the Western Cape in recent years.

However, he would not like to see the discontinued system of "block burning", as applied from the 1970s to the mid-1980s, reintroduced.

Block-burning was a highly expensive management option, very difficult to implement because of regular unplanned fires, and also not necessarily the best ecological option, he said.

Responding to Dr De Ronde's argument that politicians had to accept responsibility for reducing the huge fire threat that has been allowed to develop, Mr Marais said this was too limited a view.

"I would not like to defend politicians, but I would suggest that fire management in a fire-prone environment like the Cape Floristic Region – and more specifically the fynbos – is the responsibility of the broader community.

"If I build a R1,5-million house high on the slopes of the Outeniqua mountains above George or above Gordons Bay or wherever, my property will border on fire-prone natural veld.

"Is it the responsibility of central government or the taxpayer to protect my property? I would say 'No, it is not'."

However, he agreed that central government should invest more in managing the mountain water catchment areas, and that this would be highly cost-effective.

"This is not because these are nice places for rich people to hike in, but rather for their economic worth in terms of ecosystem function," he said.

Effective catchment management included indirect fire protection measures.

This included the removal of invasive alien plants, Mr Marais said.

These plants increased the fuel load in the veld and therefore increased the potential intensity of future fires.

"This has a direct effect on the risk factor in terms of damage to property, as well as the costs of fire-fighting and protection operations."

This was why the "Working for Water" project, which involves removing alien plants from water catchments, was training workers in fire management.

Unfortunately some of the project's southern Cape operations had been suspended because of a lack of funding, Mr Marais said.

"The potential exists for rebuilding the capacity for catchment management activities, such as it was during the 1970s to mid-1980s, and we are doing some of this work already," he said.

"But we need more investment to develop this potential. I predict this would be not only an environmentally viable investment, but also economically and socially viable as well."

The central government could not provide all the required funds, Mr Marais added.

"Pretoria might, however, be prepared to go into partnerships with local and provincial authorities to develop the 'environmental services industry', but it will have to be a partnership.

"We might even be able to find international partners if we play our cards right.

"After all, our biggest export product at this stage is tourism, and that is largely dependent on our natural environment – which is fire-prone!"

International affair: Makiko Shimazi from Japan is one of 20 volunteers removing alien vegetation in the new Cape Peninsula National Park. With him are Sello Rakodi from Cardiff, Wales, left, and Lincoln Plaatjie from Nyanga

Volunteers from far and wide

ARG 25/9/98

JOHN YELD (56)

The ecological restoration of the Peninsula mountain chain is being further boosted this month through the efforts of 20 young volunteer workers from as far afield as Japan, Korea, Holland and Britain.

The 20 volunteers – 10 of them from South Africa and 10 from overseas – have been staying at the Sunbird Environmental Centre at Silvermine and working in the new Cape Peninsula National Park, helping to remove invasive alien vegetation which is seriously threatening the Peninsula's unique national heritage.

They are part of an international work camp programme organised through the United Nations Volunteers Programme and in partnership with the Quaker Peace Centre.

Similar work camps are held throughout the world, with the aim of bringing together young people who can build relationships across nations and cultures through working together.

It is the first time such a work camp is being held in the Western Cape.

"The volunteers are involved in a three-week alien vegetation clearing programme at Silvermine," explained SA National Parks spokesman Shoni Khangala.

"The programme was widely advertised through the UN Volunteers Programme, and locally via community newspapers and community groups.

"We've involved a local group, the Friends of Silvermine, in the volunteers' clearing programme and in their recreational activities during weekends.

"And the international group has also had the opportunity of interacting with local contractors from the nearby community of Masiphumelele at Noordhoek."

The volunteer group has been working in areas that are less accessible to the contractors, and has targeted pockets of alien vegetation in remote spots in the mountains.

Mpumalanga govt overrules parks board

BD 25/9/98 (56)

Dustin Chick

THE Mpumalanga cabinet has vetoed a recommendation by environmental affairs MEC Fish Mahlalela to accept the resignation of Mpumalanga Parks Board chief Alan Gray.

The cabinet instead decided to formally suspend Gray and institute disciplinary action against him, Mahlalela's spokesman Sipho Lukhele said yesterday. Lukhele said Gray would be immediately fired and criminal proceedings instituted against him if he was found guilty.

Gray has been accused of conducting secret funding deals with state assets after he allegedly issued six illegal promissory notes valued at about R1,3bn without cabinet or Reserve Bank approval.

The promissory notes issued by Gray used the board's assets as collateral in return for international loans totalling between R340m and R500m.

Gray had initially been forced out on Tuesday, but was reinstated by the provincial cabinet on Wednesday and immediately suspended.

The severance package which had been offered to Gray after he left was also withdrawn as a result of his reinstatement.

Lukhele said disciplinary proceedings would get underway immediately.

Mpumalanga premier Mathews Phosa last night accepted full responsibility for his cabinet's decision to suspend Gray.

Phosa said the decision was consistent with national government efforts to root out corruption.

The provincial government also announced that newly appointed members of the Mpumalanga Parks Board would retain their positions.

They would meet again once a new board had been constituted.

Members of the old board of directors were also suspended with immediate effect, pending the outcome of investigations into their conduct.

The board's suspension followed the issuing of contrasting statements by old members of the board about the promissory notes.

The possible integration of the Mpumalanga Parks Board and the Mpumalanga Tourism Authority has been put on hold to allow stakeholders to present their recommendations on the matter.

Kruger park lions dying like flies

DEATH SENTENCE: These are the first lions tested for TB early this year using a new procedure. Until then, lions had to be killed before being examined. Of 33 lions tested, 32 had TB

ST 27/9/98 (56)

CHRIS BARRON

LIONS in the Kruger National Park are being wiped out by an incurable and deadly bovine tuberculosis. Park authorities were warned four years ago to put fences up to contain the disease. But nothing was done — and a new report indicates that the disease is spreading like wildfire.

Radical action is needed, otherwise the entire lion population could be wiped out within five to 10 years, according to Dr Johan Krige, deputy director in the Department of Agriculture. "Lions are dying like flies," he said.

In the southern part of the park, roughly 2 500km² or one quarter of the park, more than 90 percent of lions tested are infected, and scientists say most of these will die. This is the area most favoured by tourists for its luxury game lodges and proximity to Johannesburg.

Now park officials face two options: erecting a massive fence to cut the park in two or killing vast numbers of animals to prevent further infection.

Peter Mokaba, deputy tourism minister, said yesterday the situation was so serious that South Africa might have to ask for international help. "The impact on our economy could be devastating," he said.

Private game lodges which feed off the Kruger Park warn that tourists will go elsewhere unless action is taken.

Lions have no natural resistance to the disease. They catch it from infected buffalo, whole herds of which are riddled with it. But the disease has also been diagnosed in cheetah, baboons and kudu.

The leopard that killed a Kruger Park ranger last month has been found to have been suffering from TB. Dr Leo Braack, acting general manager for conservation development in the park, said it probably attacked the ranger because it was too weak to catch normal prey.

Krige said his department had told the Parks Board four years ago to put up fences to contain the disease, but the warning was ignored.

Braack said the ecological repercussions of erecting a fence make it an unlikely option.

He said more likely alternatives would be to eradicate the worst-infected buffalo herds, or to adopt a "wait-and-see" approach in the hope that a vaccine might be developed.

Krige said a fence need be only a temporary measure until the disease had been eradicated in buffalo. He said low-level eradication would not work. "If you want to do it properly you do a radical job and you do it now," he said.

Braack said officials became aware of the first case in the park in 1990, but nothing was done because, "quite frankly, we did not know what to do then".

He said the park had rejected the agricultural department's pressure to put up a fence because this would have been "a drastic ecological intervention". He admitted "we didn't know what the impact of bovine tuberculosis was then".

The report, which has set alarm bells ringing, was written by Professor Nick Kriek, head of pathology in the faculty of veterinary science at the University of Pretoria, and Dr Dewald Keet, chief state veterinarian for Kruger National Park.

Compiled earlier this year, their study shows that the spread of TB in lions has accelerated sharply.

In the area they focused on, in the south-eastern corner of the park, there were 67 lions in 1974. In 1995, numbers had dwindled to 25. In the past three years this has halved to 12, and they say the most likely cause of death is bovine tuberculosis.

The most obvious manifestation of the disease is animals that become weak and emaciated.

In 1995, staff were asked to report emaciated lions. Of the 55 reported, 34 were traced and 29 of these were terminally ill with TB. Most of them were from south of the Sabi River.

Another 33 lions south of the Sabi were then tested, and 32 were found to have TB.

"The prevalence of tuberculosis in lions in the southern part of the Kruger National Park is much higher than was previously anticipated," the scientists write.

Kriek believes that eradication, whether by culling or fencing, is impractical because by now no-one knows how far north the disease has spread.

He believes that enough people had access to enough information in 1992 to decide what needed to be done then. "The impact of what we're facing now could have been reduced if they had acted five years ago."

Incineration of toxic waste put on hold

(56)

A facility of this kind will attract waste imports to the region

Star 28/9/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Plans by the Mozambican and Danish governments to incinerate toxic waste in a cement kiln in Matola City outside Maputo this month, have been postponed indefinitely.

Mayor of the town, Carlos Filipe Tembe, told The Star that the Mozambican government had started an open debate with the community and non-governmental organisations to talk about other options instead of incineration.

The Matola community had not been informed about plans to incinerate hundreds of tons of toxic waste in the town, until representatives of the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF) and two world renowned experts on incineration visited the town to look into the matter in August this year.

The EJNF, Greenpeace International and the Basel Action Network fear that the burning of toxic waste in a cement kiln in the town could cause dangerous cancer causing compounds.

There is also growing international fear that the establishment of an incineration facility in the town will attract waste imports to the region.

Representatives from Mozambique, EJNF and Greenpeace have travelled to Denmark to meet with the Danish portfolio committee on Environmental Affairs, to discuss the issue.

"The big question now, is what they are going to do with the waste," Tembe said.

South African company EnviroServ was commissioned to do a six month clean-up of hundreds of tons of chemicals and pesticides from storage sites around Mozambique.

Ken Bromfield, managing director of the company said their clean-up teams have been in the country since April and have completed about 70% of the work.

Over 150 tons of chemicals ranging from banned and expired pesticides, including DDT have been collected.

"We were shocked at the condition of a lot of the material," he said.

The company is scheduled to finish its operations in Mozambique by early November. All the chemicals are destined for storage at a depot in Matola.

WILEY A 'BEACON OF LIGHT'

Environment the loser in W Cape

(56)

THE province's environment affairs portfolio has been tossed around like a hot potato — and the environment is likely to be the loser. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

CT 28/9/98

HE came in like a breath of fresh air to a portfolio that has been shoved around the Western Cape cabinet like a stray dog nobody wants.

But Mark Wiley had hardly taken over the reins of the Environment Affairs portfolio when it was whipped away from him and tossed back into the hands of Kobus Meiring.

This is the fifth time the Environment Affairs portfolio has changed hands this year, reinforcing the perception that it is the Cinderella department in the provincial cabinet, one which is not taken seriously.

Environmentalists say that with no MEC staying in the post long enough to get to grips with the environmental challenges facing the Western Cape, the environment is likely to be the loser, which in turn will have a negative impact on tourism and thus on the province's economy.

At the start of this year, Meiring held the portfolio, after which it was handed in quick succession to Martha Olckers, Gerald Morkel, Wiley and finally back to Meiring.

Earthlife Africa spokesperson Liz McDaid asked yesterday: "Why is there all this shuffling around of the portfolio, as if it were a hot potato that nobody wants?

"Wiley was like a beacon of light in the Western Cape government, and seemed to really have an understanding about environmental issues. Now that they've taken it away from him it raises the question of whether the provincial government is serious about the environment or not.

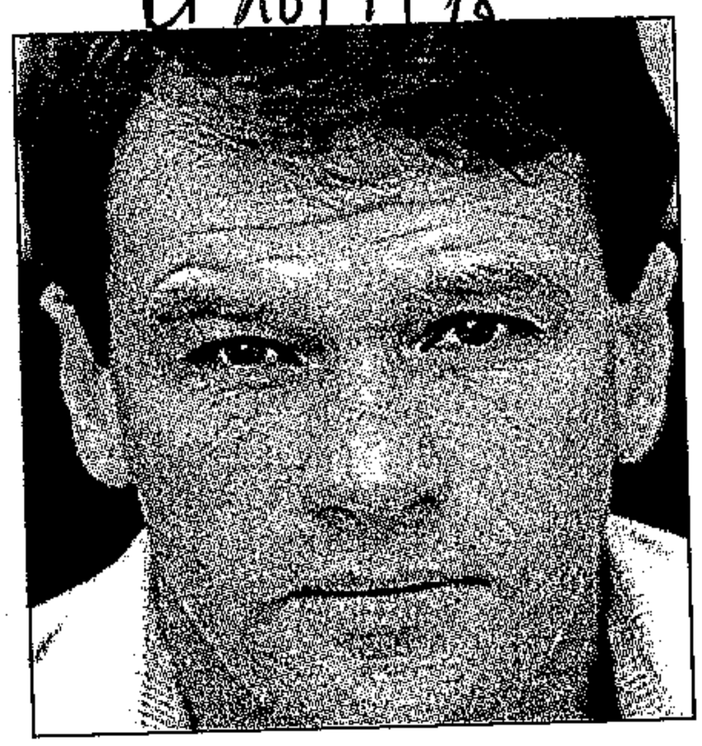
"And if they're not, where does that leave us in the province?

"Given the rampant development in the Western Cape, how is this going to impact on tourism?

"Tourism is supposed to be the No 1 thing in the Western Cape, but its success depends on having strong environmental policies in place. With all this reshuffling, how can these policies be developed?"

McDaid said Wiley had planned to put a provincial environmental commissioner in place, the only province to adopt this idea. It was questionable whether this would now be implemented.

Soon after taking up the portfolio in mid-May, Wiley called a press conference to announce his plans for the Western Cape, to which he invited most of the local green lobby, something none of the former MECs had done.



PROGRESSIVE: Mark Wiley

Unlike many politicians, Wiley saw environmental NGOs as allies in the conservation battle, and said without their support, the conservation battle in this province could not be won.

Environmental Monitoring Group director Stephen Law said yesterday: "Clearly the Western Cape government doesn't take the environment portfolio seriously, and I don't know why.

"On the one hand we hear them say that the one hope the Western Cape has of working through the economic doldrums is tourism, and particularly eco-tourism. On the other hand we see this musical chairs game with the environmental portfolio. They seem to have an inability to manage the environmental scene."

Law said Wiley's environmental management plans had been "progressive", and would have taken the portfolio beyond the realm of nature conservation — something most MECs had seemed unable to do.

Some of Wiley's environmental plans were to:

- Create a provincial department to deal with pollution control, sustainable development and impact management.
- Develop a state of the environment report for the province, to form the basis of an environmental action plan.
- Develop a provincial environmental policy as an adjunct to the national policy.
- Put a provincial environmental commissioner in place.

CAPE ARGUS, **MONDAY**, SEPTEMBER 28, 1998

Hermanus makes splash with award

ARG 28/9/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

(56)

Hermanus may be best-known for its spectacular whale-watching opportunities, but its water conservation efforts are starting to make just as much of a splash.

The latest honour for the Greater Hermanus Water Conservation Programme is the 1998 Corporate Conservation Award from the Wildlife and Environment Society.

The award was presented at a gala dinner as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Society's Western Cape Region.

Earlier this year, the programme was one of three conservation projects nominated for the national Green Trust conservation project awards.

Hermanus was chosen as the pilot project for the national water conservation campaign of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, and two years down the line it is proving a major success.

Within one year of the September 1996 start of the three-year pilot project, water consumption in Hermanus had dropped 20%, and the overall target of a 30% reduction is still well within reach

Despite the low rainfall during this period, the town used almost four million litres of water a day less than was initially projected for the peak summer months of 1997/98.

In October 1996, a new "escalating block-rate" water tariff was introduced which rewarded conservation efforts and penalised heavy water consumption.

And despite consumer sensitivity to tariff increases, 96% of respondents in a recent residents' opinion poll agreed that the water conservation programme should continue.

"There was uncertainty and much speculation as to the success and sustainability of the programme when we started," says Greater Hermanus town engineer James van der Linde.

"But we have achieved unprecedented success over the past two years, and in these 24 months we've shown the rest of South Africa and the world that a reduction in water consumption is possible."

Mr Van der Linde acknowledges that there has been some opposition to the programme.

He says some people still argue that a water conservation programme involves too much hard work and individual effort, and that it is easier to find a new source of water such as building another dam or drilling more boreholes.

"The fact is that Hermanus has shown the world that while finding additional water sources may be the easy, albeit expensive, way out, it is not the only way," he says.

"We have shown our countrymen that a paradigm shift is possible, that people actually do care about the environment, and that an awareness about water consumption and the more efficient use of water doesn't necessarily mean a change in lifestyle."

■ The Wildlife and Environment Society's Gold Medal Award for conservation was presented to Professor Eugene Moll at the weekend anniversary dinner.

Professor Moll, a former head of the University of Cape Town's botany department, is one of South Africa's leading plant ecologists and an expert on indigenous forests. While at UCT, he lobbied hard for the effective conservation of the Table Mountain chain, and was co-author of a highly influential report on the ecological status of the mountain.

Professor Moll was recently appointed principal of the Southern African Wildlife College, situated in Mpumalanga near the Kruger National Park.

Learning: Hermanus Montessori school pupils on a visit to the De Bos dam with a Working for Water team member

Deadly Kruger disease leaves experts divided

(66)

TB threat to lions and other animals sparks widely differing opinions on the likely outcome of infection

Star 29/9/98

Pretoria Correspondent

Fur is flying in the row over the bovine tuberculosis epidemic infecting buffaloes and lions in the south of the Kruger National Park.

The disease, which has apparently infected 90% of the lions in the southern part of the park, could mean many animals may have to be killed to prevent the epidemic spreading.

At least three of the Big Five have been affected, according to nine scientists who have been investigating the disease since 1991.

But park director David Mabunda said yesterday that reports that the park's entire lion population could be wiped out within the next five to 10 years were not accurate.

According to South African National Parks spokesperson Thys Steyn, visitors can rest assured that the problem has not grown to such proportions that it will have any effect on the quality of time spent in the Kruger National Park.

He said the article in a Sunday newspaper which claimed that the Kruger's lions were "dying like flies", in the words of Agriculture Department deputy director Dr Johan Krige, took them completely by surprise.

But Professor Nick Kriek, deputy chairperson of the TB in Wildlife Study Group, which is conducting research into the disease, said he believed that some officials were denying the report because too little had been done to combat the problem.

"I think the way in which it was presented (in the newspaper) may have seemed exaggerated, but there was nothing scientifically incorrect in that report."

Bovine TB has also been identified in the Umfolozi-Hluhluwe reserve in KwaZulu Natal, as well as several private farms bordering the Kruger National Park.

In April last year, a moratorium was placed on the movement of buffaloes from Hluhluwe-Umfolozi because of a large outbreak of bovine TB.

During the same month it was announced that a R7-million fence was to be built around the Kruger Park to prevent the spread of wildlife-borne diseases, including TB. This has not yet materialised.

Kruger National Park director Mabunda said they had struggled with the tender procedure for the fence.

"They've only finally agreed on who's going to get the tender, but those people are so slow that the fence will not be finished by the end of the year.

"Personally, I'm not sure that a fence is the answer."

By October last year, park senior conservation manager Johan van der Merwe said strict measures had been adopted to prevent the TB spreading to farmers' cattle.

Buffaloes appear to be the hosts for the bovine TB, with some herds being 92% infected and other herds, particularly in the north of the park, completely disease free.

Lions, baboons, kudus, cheetahs and leopards have also been affected.

"At this stage it's like Aids," Mabunda said.

"We are working very hard and will definitely find a solution."

Anatomy of a wildlife killer

The bovine tuberculosis currently threatening the wildlife population of the Kruger National Park has been around for thousands of years and, experts say, has a similar effect to the TB which infects humans.

The airborne disease is transferred by coughing, infected water, and by eating the meat of infected animals.

During the initial stages of the sickness, bovine TB results in coughing, but animals frequently go into remission, with the disease resurfacing as soon as they come under stress.

Once this happens, the bacteria can spread throughout the animal's body.

While it affects mainly hooved animals, it can be transferred to other species (as has happened in the Kruger National Park), and is a very serious illness in lions.

Few animals infected by bovine TB survive.

First peace park angers San

(56) CT 29/9/98

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE first of Southern Africa's proposed "peace parks" — conservation areas that straddle international borders — is set to come into being with the linking of South Africa's Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and Botswana's Gemsbok National Park.

This will create a park of more than 28 000km², three times the size of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park.

An agreement between the two countries recognising the new park, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, has been gazetted and is likely to be promulgated before the end of the year.

This will allow the area to be managed as a single entity and tourists to move freely around the park without the restrictions of border controls.

But a possible obstacle to the formation of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is that the San people, who were kicked off the land when the two national parks were founded in the 1940s, say they have been excluded from the negotiations.

This is contrary to the World Conservation Union's policy that management plans for transfrontier conservation areas should engage indigenous peoples.

The San are also angry that the new name for the park is Tswana. They argue that it should have been given a San name as the San were the original inhabitants of the land.

The Southern Kalahari San, who have lodged a land restitution claim for the rights to use a portion of the Kalahari Gemsbok Park, want to know how the formation of the transfrontier park will affect their claim.

"It makes one's heart raw to hear how things have gone on behind our backs," Petrus Vaalbooi, chairperson of the =\Khomani San Association, said.

"We have been negotiating with SA National Parks about our land claim, but have been told nothing about the peace park.

"And we feel angry about the name 'Kgalagadi'. It is a Tswana name, not a Bushman name. The government is always talking about recognition of indigenous people, but this shows that it is not true. We are tired of the nice speeches they make. It's just like the old apartheid system.

"The graves of our *grootmense* (ancestors) are in that park, but they don't care about that."

The Southern African San Institute (Sasi), which acts for San people, has written to the SA National Parks objecting to the new name and the San's exclusion from negotiations.

It said the San regarded the government's lack of consultation as "bad faith" and that the bilateral agreement made no mention that SA National Parks had acknowledged the San had a legitimate land claim.

Nigel Crawhall, a linguist attached to Sasi, said the Tswana name was contrary to the policy of the United Nation's international committee on place names, which sought to bring back indigenous names.

"It has been accepted in principle to change to the original names all the names of places in South Africa where San people are still living," Crawhall said.

"There is absolutely no question that the San were the first inhabitants of the land to become the transfrontier park. Not giving it a San name is bizarre and doesn't bode well for the first transfrontier park."

John Hanks, director of the Peace Parks Foundation which raises funds to pay for the formation of transfrontier parks, said yesterday: "We've only just been made aware of the lack of consultation with the local communities and obviously this is unacceptable. There must be genuine, active consultation with local people."

The SA National Parks has been asked to comment.

The public has until tomorrow to comment on the bilateral agreement. Comments should be sent by fax to Dr B de Villiers at (012) 343-0155 or by e-mail to bertusdv@parks-sa.co.za.

NEW PLAN TO COUNCIL

Landmark offer for Oudekraal

(56)

OUDEKRAAL owner Kassie Wiehahn has approached the city council with a radical new plan to develop his massive tract of land on the slopes of Table Mountain. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports. CT 30/9/98

THE proposal is to build housing and commercial buildings on the land closest to Camps Bay, known as portion seven, and develop a ribbon of high-density housing along Victoria Road, low down on the slopes of the rest of his property stretching to the new De Oudekraal Hotel, a distance of about four kilometres.

In exchange for these development rights, Wiehahn has put forward a concept of cross-subsidisation for low-cost housing on the Cape Flats.

For every property Wiehahn sells at Oudekraal, he would pay a certain amount of money into a special account to be used to build houses in disadvantaged areas.

The number of low-cost houses he will support is not clear, but sources say it is around 100 000 units.

Sources say if this proposal gets the go-ahead, Wiehahn will then donate the upper sections of portions 6, 5 and 4 of his Oudekraal property to the Cape Peninsula National Park.

City Manager Andrew Boraine has confirmed that he and David Daniels, head of planning and economic development for the city council, met Wiehahn last month to discuss the concept of subsidising housing on the Cape Flats from the sale of plots at Oudekraal.

"I requested that he submit his ideas to me in writing, which he has now done. I am discussing the concept with my staff and will obviously speak to the relevant committees of council to formulate a response to Wiehahn's letter," Boraine said yesterday.

He said the city council's official position that Wiehahn did not have any development rights on his Oudekraal property was still unchanged. Wiehahn would therefore have to submit a fresh development application to the council.

"Such an application would obviously be subjected to an extremely rigorous process of environmental assessment," Boraine said.

These new moves have ended almost a year of silence on the controversial Oudekraal development issue.

Plans to develop luxury housing at Oudekraal were announced in 1996, leading to a massive public outcry. It was fiercely opposed by environmentalists, who were later joined by members of the Muslim community because of the presence of kramats, or graves, at Oudekraal.

The city council then sought legal opinion on the validity of the development plans for Oudekraal, which had been passed in 1957. They were told the plans were invalid because of a technical slip-up made decades ago.

The city council then turned down the Oudekraal development.

Wiehahn could have challenged the city's decision in court, but has not done so.

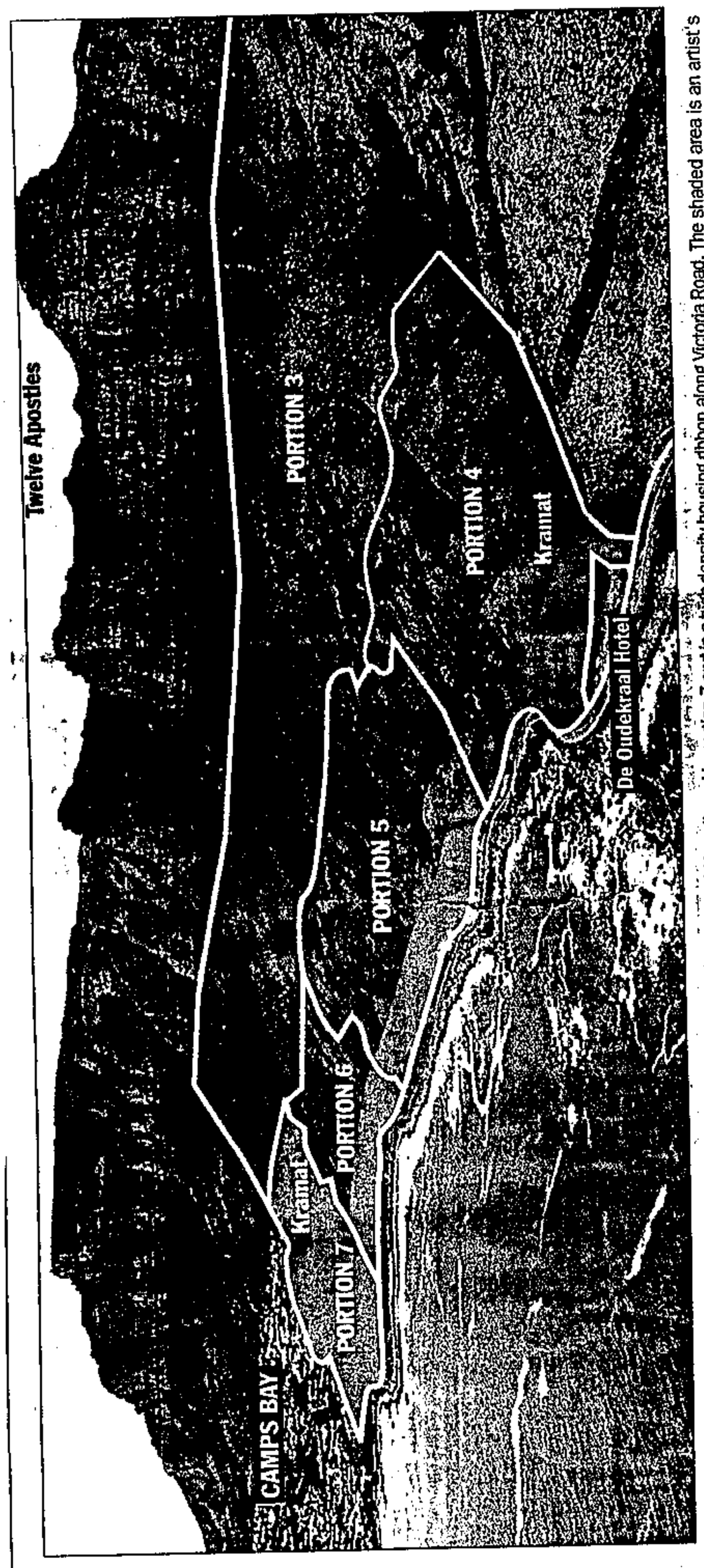
Last year MEC for Environment Affairs Kobus Meiring convened a meeting of interested parties to negotiate a deal whereby Wiehahn would be allowed to develop a portion of his 400-hectare property in exchange for donating the rest to the Cape Peninsula National Park.

This was also met with public opposition, and negotiations petered out.

● See Page 3

WHAT do you think of the plan? to comment, phone Teleletters Monday to Friday from 10am to noon on (021) 488-4722.

Today's Teleletters — Page 18



FAIR TRADE?: In Oudekraal landowner Kassie Wiehahn's proposal, development would be allowed in portion 7 and in a high-density housing ribbon along Victoria Road. The shaded area is an artist's impression of the ribbon.

Oudekraal land deal

(56)

❑ From Page 1

CT 30/9/98

The National Monuments Council has provisionally declared portions 7, 6, 5 and 4 of Oudekraal national monuments, effectively freezing any development — for now.

A spokesperson for SA National Parks says: "We want to get as much Oudekraal land as possible into the Cape Peninsula National Park. The only way to do so is to negotiate a trade-off with the Oudekraal owner.

"The proposal to have a strip of housing along the length of the property is not one we would support, but we could find other solutions.

"However we have made a commitment to the Cape Peninsula National Park Committee (which includes representatives of the public) that we will not enter into negotiations on Oudekraal without their support."

A National Monuments Council spokesperson says: "We are surprised that the city council is discussing the development, as we thought they would wait until Wiehahn had proved in a court that he had development rights. A strip of housing running along the length of the property would be disastrous."

And a Mountain Club spokesperson says: "It would be ghastly to see a strip of development along the length of Oudekraal, as the conservation aim is to preserve as much of the crest-to-coast land on the Peninsula as possible.

"Realistically, no land-owner is going to give you something for nothing, so some sort of trade-off must be reached. The public must decide what sort of price they are willing to pay in a trade-off that will allow the landowner development rights on a section of land, but would secure maximum amount for conservation."

Sad tale of cry the belittered country ...

ARG 30/9/98

Mountain of muck must go

(56)

INSIDE STORY

One cannot help but be dismayed at how the landscape is being despoiled by the habit of strewing rubbish in every direction in the expectation that someone esle will pick it up, writes **RICHARD STEYN**, former editor of The Star

As a tourist destination, South Africa is widely renowned for its sunshine, mountains, beaches and its plentiful flora and fauna. Yet much of its natural beauty is being threatened by mounting piles of litter.

Drive along the highways and byways of our diverse country, as I have done recently, and one cannot but help being dismayed at how the beauty of the landscape is being despoiled by the South African habit of strewing rubbish in every direction in the fond expectation that someone else will pick it up.

From the Cape Flats in the south-west to the borders of the Kruger Park in the north-east, our roads are lined with rusted cans, plastic bottles, discarded shopping bags – anything that can be flung through the window of a car or minibus taxi.

And the more travelled the route, the greater the mess.

Motor through Gazankulu and you will find every thornbush adorned with plastic bags.

In the Transkei, picturesque villages stand knee-deep in garbage.

Outside the pretty Free State village of Harrismith, an entire hillside is pocked with litter blown across from a nearby squatter camp.

Along the KwaZulu Natal coast, beaches are strewn with rubbish of every kind.

Reasons (and excuses) for this unsightliness are not hard to find. Poor people living from hand to mouth, it is said, have more pressing matters on their minds than cleaning up their litter; in most rural areas and townships rubbish services are unknown; the housing backlog from the apartheid years has led to uncontrollable squatting ... and so on.

But this is not good enough. Poorer countries, of which Zimbabwe is one, are managing to keep their litter under control and out of sight.

The truth of the matter is that we South Africans are a heedless lot.

You have but to look at our rugby and soccer stadiums or concert venues after a big event to realise that litter bins are there for decorative purposes only.

Does this matter very much?

Are there not more important issues to worry about, notably how to create more jobs? In fact, the two concerns are linked.

Tourism has recently been identified as one of the ways in which South Africa's underperforming economy can be kick-started into recovery in order to create jobs.

But what tourist wants to visit a foreign country in order to wade around in muck?

I know of friends who returned unimpressed from Malaysia because the dirty beach outside their hotel made swimming unappealing.

What, then, is to be done?

Clearly there is no sense in appealing to the better instincts of the average citizen; if people had decent instincts there would be no litter problem.

For years, volunteer organisations such as War on Waste and Keep South Africa Tidy have struggled unavailingly to stem the tide.

Only decisive action from the top, followed by legislative measures, can do the trick.

Outlaw the sale of non-biodegradable containers from plastic bottles to shopping bags.

Force supermarkets to make use of brown paper instead of plastic bags.

Put a premium on the price of beer and soft drink cans, and encourage, by means of a refundable deposit, the use and re-use of glass bottles.

Similarly, use a deposit to encourage the return of cans.

But isn't this an infringement of a South African's inalienable right to drink beer out of a can and throw the latter anywhere he likes?

No doubt it is.

However, the prospect of infringing personal liberty has not deterred a tough-minded politician like Dr Nkosazana Zuma from doing what she and her Government think best for us.

Smoking may cause harm to people, but it doesn't disfigure the environment in the way that drinking out of plastic bottles and tins does.

If the litter mountain is not to overwhelm us, a measure of coercion is required to change people's behaviour and convert them to the use of bio-degradable material.

The time to act is now – before the piles of rubbish grow too high to cope with. Is it realistic to think that we can turn the clock back to the days when milk came in glass bottles, and groceries were carried in paper or string hold-alls that were kept and not thrown away?

I believe it is.

If Zimbabwe can keep tins and plastic out, why can't we?

What a mess: our roads are lined with rusted cans, plastic bottles, discarded shopping bag – anything that can be flung from a car

Suspended parks chief threatens to sue media and agency reporter

BD 20/9/98 (56)

NELSPRUIT — Mpumalanga's suspended parks chief Alan Gray refused to answer written questions yesterday about his business dealings with government or government contractors and instead threatened to sue the media, African Eye News Service reports.

Gray said in a lawyer's letter that media elements were conducting personal crusades and vendettas against him and had overstepped the line of constructive or impartial journalism.

Gray was suspended from the Mpumalanga Parks Board last week and charged with misconduct for secretively issuing six promissory notes worth R1,3bn to a series of SA financial brokers in return for offshore loans of between R340m and R500m.

The notes, issued without ministerial or Reserve Bank approval, used the parks board's assets and game parks as irrevocable and unconditional collateral for loans in one-year periods.

National Finance Minister Trevor Manuel has branded all the deals illegal.

Gray's role in the scheme and his use of his own companies for unrelated parks board contracts is being investigated by the Heath special investigative unit.

African Eye News Service submitted a detailed list of written questions probing Gray's business and other links to a number of the key role-players in the offshore loan scheme on September 21.

Gray's attorney, Pieter Swanepoel, said yesterday that Gray had refused to answer the questions and was instead considering a defamation action against African Eye News Service, the reporter who initially broke the story, Justin Arenstein, the Sunday Times, The Star and Mail & Guardian. — AENS.

Many unimpressed by developer's generosity

(56)

CT 1/10/98

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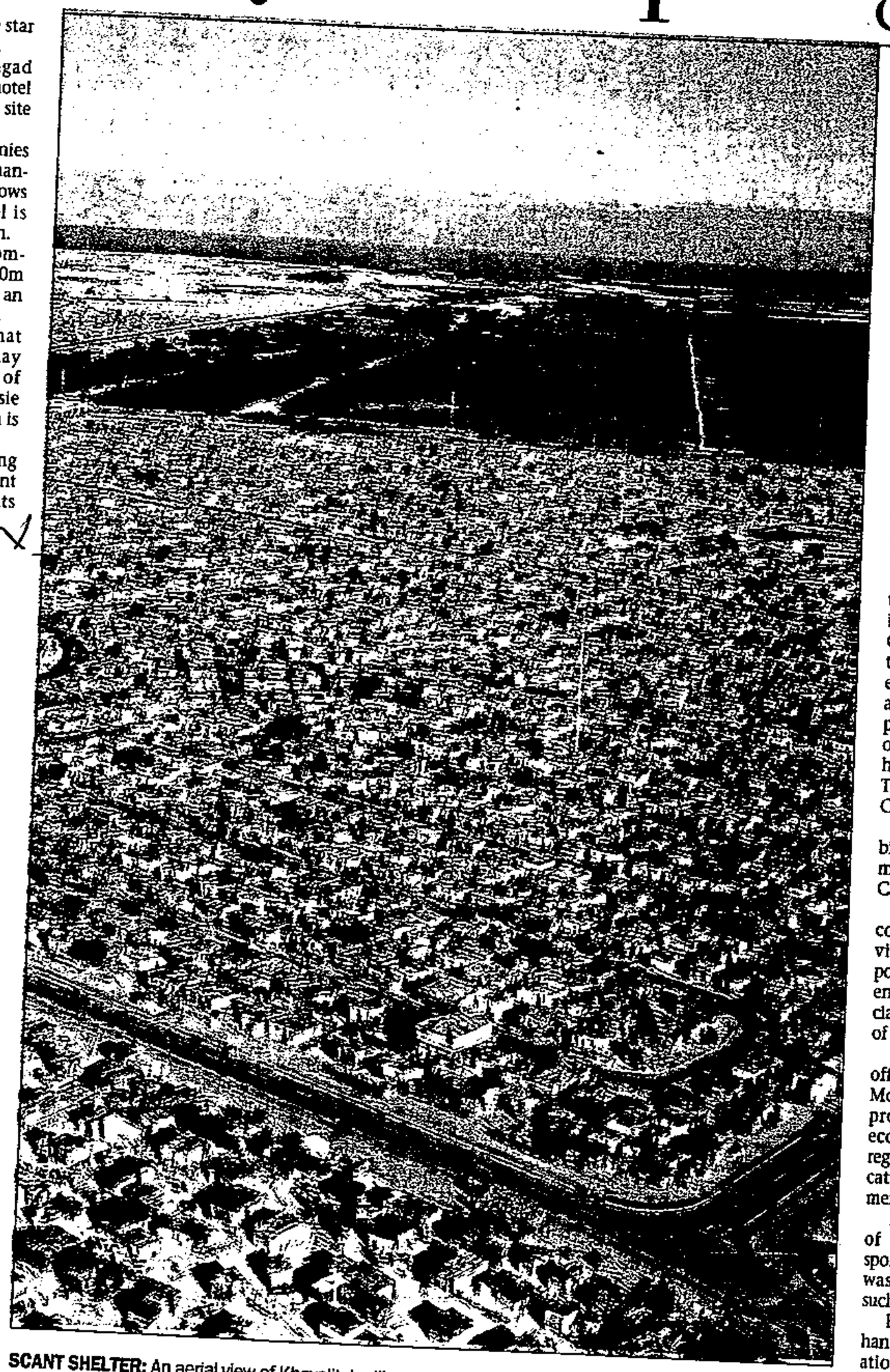


SCANT SHELTER: An aerial view of Khayelitsha illustrates the urgent need for housing. PICTURES: FILE

Industry groups react cautiously to new proposal

(56) CT 1/10/98

DAN SIMON

THREE influential organisations yesterday reacted with some caution to an ambitious proposal to develop Oudekraal on the slopes of Table Mountain which, if permitted by the Cape Town City Council, could result in an unprecedented housing boom and large-scale job creation opportunities.

The Association for the Promotion of the Western Cape Economic Growth (Wesgro), the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Building Industries Federation of South Africa (Bifsa) were asked to comment on a radical new plan put forward by Oudekraal owner Kassie Wiehahn to develop his tract of land on the slopes of Table Mountain stretching from Camps Bay to Hottentots Huisie.

Added to this proposal was a R2 billion sweetener for the development of low-cost housing on the Cape Flats.

Wesgro said that while it welcomed new development, it was vitally important that any proposed new development fell within environmental parameters, especially when it related to the slopes of Table Mountain

Wesgro's acting chief executive officer, Peter Pullen, said: "Table Mountain has become an icon to promote tourism generally and eco-tourism in particular in our region and this in itself provides a catalyst for growth and development in the tourism sector."

In his response, Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry spokesperson Charl Adams said he was "reluctant to comment" on such a sensitive issue.

But he continued: "On the one hand anything to do with job creation is a good thing. This is the year of the job summit.

"However, on the other hand there is concern over the impact on the mountain and its effect on tourism. Anything that could be damaging to the mountain could affect us all.

"I'm not saying it's good or bad, but it's a quid pro quo. However, it's still a proposal. He (Wiehahn) has not contested the court case and the legal argument the city council put forward that he has no development rights. It (the proposal) has its positive side but on the other hand one is still concerned about the effect on a pristine mountain."

Bifsa's Johannesburg-based chief executive, Ian Robinson, said South Africa was currently spending about R3bn on low-cost housing and was producing about 150 000 low-cost houses a year.

"This amount of money represents 2% of the national budget allocation. What the country should be spending is 5% of the budget to eliminate the backlog in low-cost housing and to cater for a population growth which needs 200 000 low cost houses a year.

"Clearly this R2bn which is being talked about sounds like an awful lot of money from one development but it would take several years to collect. If worked out, it would provide 50 000 houses at about R40 000 per unit.

"But recognising that such a project will take years, yes, it will have quite an impact on the building industry. On the strength of what I have been told I can't help but be positive. However, I cannot comment further until I have all the facts before me."

Robinson said the building industry was not in good shape because of high interest rates. He added that Bifsa was putting together a package aimed at fostering a new low-cost housing initiative and with job creation in mind.

'Recognise opportunity'

(56) CT 1/10/98

PRISCILLA SINGH

NEWS that 100 000 low-cost houses could be in the pipeline for the Western Cape was expected to spread like wildfire through squatter camps on the Cape Flats and surrounding peninsula, where the majority of the province's homeless have been on housing lists for years.

So far at least 52 000 houses have been built and 16 000 are under construction, but the current housing situation reflects a far greater problem than the council's projections indicate.

When contacted for comment on Kassie Wiehahn's offer of R2 billion to build houses, civic representatives were at first confused but later excited as they realised the possibilities.

Gladstone Ntamo, a councillor on the Cape housing committee, said he was happy that at last there was a glimmer of hope for solving the housing crisis in the province. He represents the Kakaza Trading Camp, Brown's Farm and Crossroads, where abject poverty and unemployment have led to a high crime rate.

He said thousands of people have been on waiting lists for years and have almost lost hope of getting a "real house".

"It is unacceptable that people are living in shacks and it is sad that some of them have come to accept that this is the only house they will ever have.

"If people have houses then the crime rate will come down. This talk of building 100 000 new houses will give jobs to our people, it will improve the economy, but most importantly it will provide a proper roof for those who have always known leaky roofs," Ntamo said.

He said other wealthy business people should follow Wiehahn's example.

John Neels, an economic developer for the South African National Civic Organisation and the chairperson of the Provincial Development Council, said he had no problems with anyone who wanted to donate half their profits towards building houses.

"We have to recognise there is a housing backlog, and other needs in the province. We must go the Philadelphia route, where any developer must donate a percentage of the profits to the local community as Wiehahn is proposing to do. The reality is that government does not have money to fulfil all the housing demands.

"I'm excited about Wiehahn's contribution. It should not be a point-scoring issue. There has been too much emphasis on the environmental needs in white areas, and an example is that so much money is pumped into Table Mountain and the reserves around it. How come no one worries about sand storms, flooding and other physical problems on the Cape Flats?

"How come places like Oudekraal get huge coverage just because there are environmental concerns?

"Why can't we use our natural resources to alleviate the problems? I'm praying all the roleplayers recognise this opportunity. As the saying goes, 'Do not look a gift horse in the mouth,'" Neels added.

'Don't bargain with our needs'

(56)

WILLEM STEENKAMP
STAFF WRITER

CT 11/10/98

USING "the needs of the people" as a bargaining chip by Oudekraal developer Kassie Wiehahn was unacceptable, Pan Africanist Congress parliamentarian Patricia de Lille said yesterday.

De Lille, who has consistently been vocal on land issues and housing for the poor, said this yesterday in reaction to Wiehahn's proposal that if he be allowed to extend his proposed development plans for his Oudekraal property, R2 billion could be made available for low-cost housing in the Western Cape.

Wiehahn believes that sum could be used to halve the provincial housing shortfall of 215 000 units.

"I don't like the idea of using the needs of the people to bargain," De Lille said.

She said an obviously already-wealthy person like Wiehahn had a "responsibility" to his fellow, poorer South Africans and should be prepared to part with some of his fortune in the interests of the common good.

"He should give that money with no strings attached," she said.

De Lille also felt there was not a shortage of funds for housing — but that the money was not being used effectively.

"We should be planning better and spending more efficiently," she said.

De Lille asked what quality of low-income home would be built with the money proposed by Wiehahn, and would it be better than "the rubbish being built now".

De Lille was also opposed to Table Mountain bearing the brunt of development.

"I don't think we should damage or scar Table Mountain. It should be preserved for future South Africans," she said.

'A deal with a sting in the tail'

(56) CT 1/10/98

GASANT ABARDER

WHILE some Camps Bay residents were impressed with Oudekraal owner Kassie Wiehahn's proposal to the city council, others were totally opposed to the idea, the *Cape Times* concluded in a spot survey yesterday.

"It's fantastic if R2 billion is going to the underprivileged for housing development.

"As a Camps Bay resident I'm not in favour of those kinds of development, but it's a shrewd deal with a sting in the tail," said David Gad.

"I'm totally against any development on Oudekraal.

"There is plenty of open space elsewhere in Cape Town.

"Eventually that whole area between Camps Bay and Llandudno will disappear and with it the ambience.

"I know the Muslim community, who have ground there, won't be too pleased either," was Ryan Scheibe's response.

"They've already ruined Camps Bay with houses on the mountain and now they are going to do it to Oudekraal.

"God knows what it will do to property values. It's beautiful to drive around there.

"If his gesture is genuine then it's okay, but the Muslims may have something to say," said a resident who did not want to be named.

"We'll have to wait and see what he (Wiehahn) wants to do with the property," S Noble said.

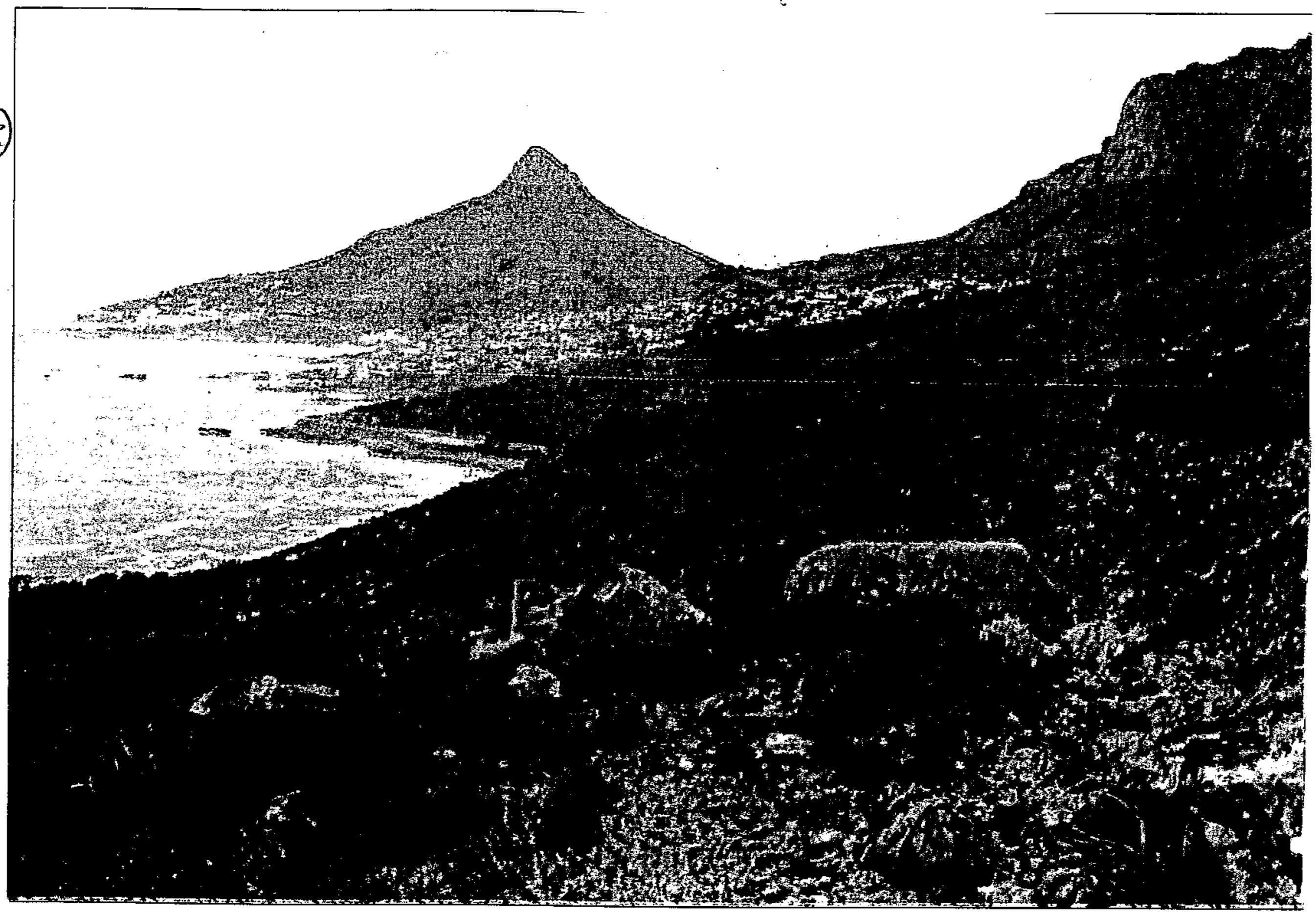
Imam Hassen Walele, an executive member of the Environment and Mazaar Action Committee, said: "The whole idea smacks of securing votes for next year's elections.

"Never in the history of South African politics have promises ever been delivered to the disadvantaged people.

"What guarantees are there of this sudden change of heart?

"This land was purchased during an illegitimate era of our history and Wiehahn does not have development rights at this stage.

"The National Monuments Council has provisionally declared the main portions a national monument, therefore freezing any development," Walele added.



GLITTERING PRIZE: A view from the Oudekraal property that Kassie Wiehahn proposes to develop.

Kassie Wiehahn's radical new plan for Oudekraal development leaves no room for SA National Parks to negotiate trade-off

CT 1/10/98 (66)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

KASSIE Wiehahn's radical new plan for developing Oudekraal make it unlikely that any of the property will be included in the new Cape Peninsula National Park.

SA National Parks had hoped to negotiate a trade-off with Wiehahn and the city council that would allow Wiehahn to develop a portion of his property with enhanced rights, such as higher density housing units, in exchange for donating the bulk of Oudekraal to conservation.

But yesterday Wiehahn told the *Cape Times:* "Has National Parks got the money to look after it if we gave it to them? I don't think so.

"Because of the steep slopes, only 50% of the whole property can be developed, so we've been asking ourselves what to do with the top bits.

"We may do some deal with private enterprise where we run that bit as a nature reserve, maybe put in some horse trails or something like that.

"At the moment it's just dead land. No one walks up there. But I'm open to discussion," Wiehahn said.

David Daitz, head of the National Parks team that runs the new Cape Peninsula National Park, said yesterday that, while he recognised the urgent need for low-cost housing, he was sorry to see Wiehahn's proposal presented as a solution to the problem of dealing with the housing backlog.

"If this plan is implemented, it will be at the cost of something that is irreplacable. We will lose the crest to coast landscape of that piece of the Peninsula for ever.

"While I couldn't put a cost to it in loss of tourism, the cumulative effect of making inroads into the Peninsula's natural environment might be disastrous.

"If it continues, we could end up with something like the Costa Brava coast in Spain. It is up to society to decide which way to go," he said.

He said National Parks had secured foreign and local finance to run the park, and it was incorrect of Wiehahn to say they could not afford to run it.

The first section of the Cape Peninsula National Park was proclaimed this year, and Daitz wants to negotiate trade-offs with private landowners, so that as much as possible of the land worthy of conservation in the Peninsula's mountain chain can become part of the park. About 20% of the land envisaged for the park is privately owned.

He said he feared Wiehahn's development proposals were too far down the line for them to negotiate a trade-off for the park.

(56)

Many unimpressed by developer's generosity

CT 1/10/98

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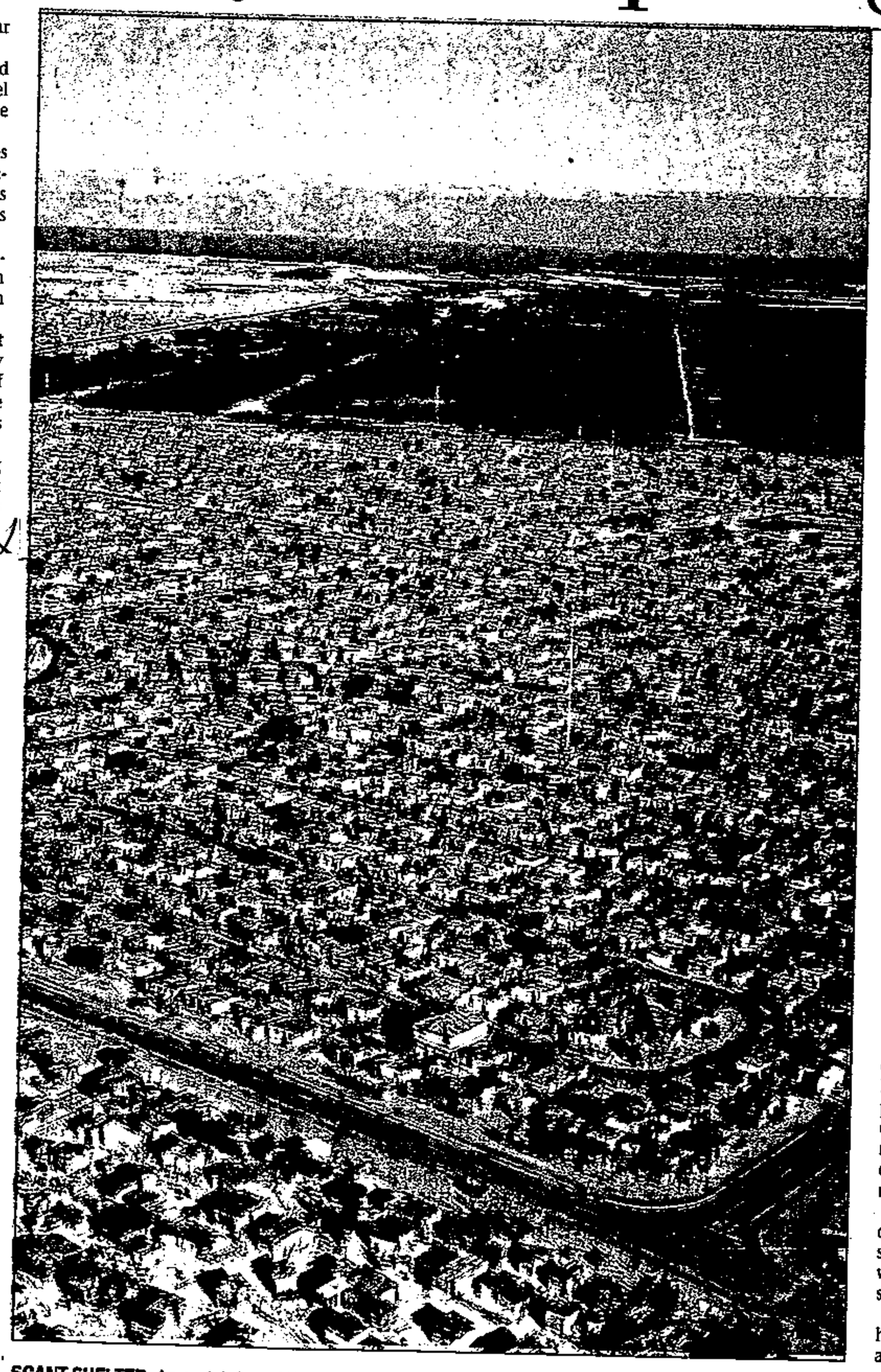

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But he continued: "On the one hand anything to do with job creation is a good thing. This is the year of the job summit.

"However, on the other hand there is concern over the impact on the mountain and its effect on tourism. Anything that could be damaging to the mountain could affect us all.

"I'm not saying it's good or bad, but it's a quid pro quo. However, it's still a proposal. He (Wiehahn) has not contested the court case and the legal argument the city council put forward that he has no development rights. It (the proposal) has its positive side but on the other hand one is still concerned about the effect on a pristine mountain."

Bifsa's Johannesburg-based chief executive, Ian Robinson, said South Africa was currently spending about R3bn on low-cost housing and was producing about 150 000 low-cost houses a year.

"This amount of money represents 2% of the national budget allocation. What the country should be spending is 5% of the budget to eliminate the backlog in low-cost housing and to cater for a population growth which needs 200 000 low cost houses a year.

"Clearly this R2bn which is being talked about sounds like an awful lot of money from one development but it would take several years to collect. If worked out, it would provide 50 000 houses at about R40 000 per unit.

"But recognising that such a project will take years, yes, it will have quite an impact on the building industry. On the strength of what I have been told I can't help but be positive. However, I cannot comment further until I have all the facts before me."

Robinson said the building industry was not in good shape because of high interest rates. He added that Bifsa was putting together a package aimed at fostering a new low-cost housing initiative and with job creation in mind.

'Dirty deeds' close clean-up group

(56) M+G 2-8/10/98

Keep South Africa Beautiful closed its files this week after its funds dried up, writes **Wonder Hlongwa**

Where to now? The closure of Keep South Africa Beautiful is a blow to government departments which are struggling with litter and waste management problems. PHOTOGRAPH: AVIGAIL VZI

South Africa's biggest waste management and environmental awareness organisation has closed shop because of corruption, mismanagement and lack of funds and direction.

The closure of Keep South Africa Beautiful comes at a time when government departments are struggling to cope with litter and waste management problems. A number of small, community-based organisations are running anti-litter campaigns, but there is a desperate need for a broad-based, educative organisation like Keep South Africa Beautiful.

An evaluation report commissioned by Vincent Mogane, the organisation's general manager, states: "There are many questions that need to be answered in the area of past financial accountability and transparency. It appears that unwritten 'gentlemen's agreements' covered many strategic organisational decisions (major funding decisions and some staff contracts)." The report was drawn up by Chris Mullins, a development consultant.

Keep South Africa Beautiful was started by the Packaging Industry of South Africa in the early 1970s. In the past it was accused of being a front for the packaging industry and of doing its "dirty work".

It enjoyed a close relationship with past governments. "Throughout the 1980s it was perceived as a white pro-Nationalist organisation with close personal relationships with the apartheid government ministers," reads the report.

It says the financial competency of the organisation's past and present board of trustees must be questioned and severely criticised for its lack of basic financial planning.

Raymond Byrne, former CEO, this week described those accusations as nonsense. He challenged Keep South Africa Beautiful to go to the police and lay charges of mismanagement and corruption, and claimed that despite being the former CEO he had not been shown the evaluation report in which he is implicated.

Alleged financial irregularities covered in the report include:

- An additional full month's salary was paid to the ex-CEO after he left in November last year, and thereafter he was paid as a consultant at an estimated R185 000 a year.
- The board's chair was paid R24 000 for three months for acting as CEO and general manager.
- Despite the fact some of the organisation's projects closed in February this year, staff members were still paid their full salaries.

The report adds that there were no regular quarterly income and expenditure reports made to heads of department.

"Why were the heads of department allegedly instructed specifically not to discuss detailed matters of finance?" it asks. "Why was actual budget and expenditure information allegedly kept so secret?"

Byrne says he will ask the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Pallo Jordan, to appoint a commission of inquiry to investigate the closure of Keep South Africa Beautiful.

"When I took over as CEO in 1992 this organisation had R700 000, and when I left last year it had R13-million," he says.

It appears the organisation misrepresented itself to the Department of Public Works before it was given R10-million for the Clean and Green project, a waste management and environmental awareness campaign launched in early 1996.

The department assigned Keep South Africa Beautiful to implement the campaign — which included community capacity-building, training, empowerment and job creation — on the understanding that it was a national organisation with well-established community structures.

"Keep South Africa Beautiful told the department we had access to 22 communities — this was not true," says an employee of the organisation. "In 10 days we had to rush to find community structures, and some staff didn't even know what they [community structures] were."

Why didn't the public works department conduct its own investigations into Keep South Africa Beautiful's credentials? The director of community-based public works funding in the department, Gaby Gumbi, says they relied on the organisation's integrity.

"Keep South Africa Beautiful is a very old organisation with a track record in waste management and environmental awareness campaigns," she says.

Owen Bruins, representative of the Packaging Industry of South Africa, says it is regrettable Keep South Africa Beautiful has closed. But he adds the closure cannot be blamed on the packaging industry.

The evaluation report recommended investigations be commissioned into the organisation's expenditure over the past three years — including the fraudulent signing of a contract, and an office burglary in which staff members were suspected to have been involved. These investigations were carried out, but the results have not been made public.

The Star ... Friday October 2 1998

Iscor blamed for water pollution on smallholdings

(56)

But the company denies being the sole cause and says residents are also to blame

Star 2/10/98

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

New studies to determine the impact of air, water and soil pollution on the smallholdings adjacent to the Iscor works in Vanderbijlpark are in the offing.

A cost benefit analysis (CBA) has been commissioned to find solutions to ongoing problems related to pollution in the communities of Linkholm, Drakeville, Steel Valley and Louisrus. According to Rick Reato of Iscor, the CBA will look at various issues, including the costs and benefits of buying out the properties instead of installing services in the communities.

Bacterial and chemical pollution of groundwater over a number of years by Iscor and the residents themselves, have been the cause of many problems including illnesses such as diarrhoea, stomach cramps, skin irritations and blood in the urine of small children.

It has also contributed to the underground water being declared unfit for human consumption. While Iscor has denied being the sole polluter, a residents suitability study completed in November last year placed most blame on the company.

The report, however, admitted that the extent of the study was limited and it was thus not possible to "unequivocally" identify the source of pollution.

However, there are strong pointers to Iscor as the major pollutant. But Reato said as long as the company was seen as the main polluter, many pollution issues would not be addressed.

"We may be a part of the problem and where we are, we will not shirk our responsibility," he said.

Studies done as early as the 1980s have shown that there is definite evidence of groundwater pollution in the area, where most of the residents rely on borehole water.

A three-year report started in 1993 found that Iscor's sludge dams and slag dump were major sources of groundwater pollution, resulting in high concentrations of calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, chloride, sulphate, ammonia and nitrate in the water. The report prompted the directorate of emergency and disaster management to declare 80% of boreholes unfit for human consumption.

Last year's report indicated that the severity of water pollution in the area seemed to be increasing.

Apart from chemical pollution in the form of increased iron concentrations, sulphates and chlorides, there was also evidence of degraded oil in the water, which could be attributed to residents or a nearby garage.

High counts of faecal pollution – as a result of seepage from communal septic tanks – has also sparked fear of an increase in the transmission of infectious diseases.

The latest CBA is expected to be completed by mid-November and will be based on the residential suitability study done last year.

A toll free hotline– 0800 002 293 – has been set up for people with queries about the CBA.

Further details can also be obtained by contacting Solly Manyaka or Vassie Maharaj at Manyaka, Greyling and Meyer on (012) 3260848.

Modipane resigns in wake of parks board promissory notes

Kevin O'Grady (56) BD 2/10/98

MPUMALANGA finance MEC Jacques Modipane resigned yesterday over his role in the issuing of three illegal promissory notes by Mpumalanga Parks Board CEO Alan Gray, which pledged provincial parks and assets as security for a R340m loan.

He was also suspended from the African National Congress, along with former environmental affairs and tourism MEC David Mkhwanazi who resigned from the provincial cabinet in April amid allegations of nepotism, mismanagement and fraud.

Modipane's resignation follows weeks of denials that he played any part in the promissory note scandal which led to Gray's suspension last week. Gray is also facing disciplinary action for allegedly issuing the notes to financial brokers Fenetic Investments.

Since news of the deal surfaced in August, Modipane has waged a war of words with Gray over whether it had government approval. Gray claimed Modipane authorised the notes while Modipane alleged that Gray forged his signature.

Modipane's resignation was also linked to allegations that he entered into a secret business partnership — with Mkhwanazi, SA's ambassador to Mozambique Mangisi Zitha and other officials — that benefited from government contracts.

Mpumalanga premier Mathews Phosa said he had accepted Modipane's resignation "as the decision of a person who takes full responsibility for his actions within the agenda of effective governance and accountability".

He said Modipane's resignation "follows recent allegations about the involvement of politicians and officials in commercial ventures that might have benefited from government contracts as well as the issuing of promissory notes by the ... parks board".

However, it appeared Modipane resigned in anticipation of his imminent dismissal. ANC sources said Modipane resigned soon after the ANC's provincial executive committee met and asked Phosa to fire him.

Provincial ANC spokesman Jackson Mthembu said Modipane was suspended from the party pending an investigation, which would begin next week, into whether he was aware of the promissory notes or had any involvement in their signing.

The ANC would also probe whether Modipane informed the cabinet, the loan co-ordinating committee and Finance Minister Trevor Manuel about the notes and whether he lied to the

Continued on Page 2

scandal

Parks Board

(56) BD 2/10/98

Continued from Page 1

ANC leadership and the public about his involvement, Mthembu said.

His possible "unethical" involvement in the Air Excellence partnership with Mkhwanazi and Zitha would also be investigated, along with allegations that the company received government contracts and that Modipane "improperly enriched himself".

Mthembu said Mkhwanazi's suspension from the ANC and as an MPL followed findings by the provincial auditor and the legislature's public accounts committee that he "bypassed ... public service procedures in appointing staff in his department".

Mkhwanazi was also found to have spent R20m "in a process of facilitation" that was used to bypass tender board procedures and to pay staff who were "illegally and improperly" appointed to his department.

Phosa said sports, arts, culture and recreation MEC Lassy Chiwayo had been appointed as acting finance MEC.

Koeberg's spent fuel is kept on site, hearing told

ARG 2/10/98

(56)

SHARKEY ISAACS
STAFF REPORTER

Concerns about safety and evacuation measures in the event of an accident at Koeberg nuclear power station were highlighted at a public inquiry into the plant.

It was also disclosed at the hearing that no spent enriched fuel had been removed from Koeberg in the 14 years since it was commissioned and that only low-level radioactive waste had been taken to the dump site near Springbok in Namaqualand. A proposed extension would be solely to create extra storage space for spent fuel.

The hearing on safety, extensions and the proposed introduction of proto-type pebble-bed modular reactors was chaired by Martha Olckers of the Western Cape legislature's standing committee on agriculture, environment affairs, tourism and gambling.

Eskom's manager of nuclear assurance and environmental affairs Tony Stott, confirmed that spent fuel was stored on site and the envisaged extensions were for additional storage space.

Stephen Law, director of the Environmental Monitoring Group, said the province should play a much more active role in evaluating the emergency response plan which should be debated routinely by the legislature.

He recommended that the provincial government insist on clear plans for the final decommissioning of the plant and any development for the future.

Further nuclear developments at the site, such as the prototype pebble bed reactor, would have a further impact on land use options, he said.

Mike Bell, who lives near the station, told the inquiry that Koeberg presented a twofold danger: the possibility of nuclear meltdown and the large quantities of radioactive waste stored there. He said he had lived for three years near the plant and had not once had any instruction on evacuation or safety.

Ian Nielsen of Blaauwberg Council's executive committee said the 40-year lifespan of Koeberg was barely acceptable and the municipality could not envisage its continuing beyond 2020.

"I believe the level of risk associated with the power station cannot be allowed to increase and that it cannot have an infinite lifespan," he said.

Meiring rejects Oudekraal 'ribbon development' plan

'I won't sacrifice God's own nature'

(56) ARG 2/10/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The Western Cape government will not allow "ribbon development" along Victoria Drive as envisaged in controversial proposals by Oudekraal landowner Kasper Wiehahn.

This assurance was given yesterday by cabinet minister Kobus Meiring, who resumed responsibility for the provincial environment portfolio this week after a cabinet re-shuffle by Premier Gerald Morkel.

Mr Meiring described the coastal strip along the slopes of the Twelve Apostles at Oudekraal as "God's own nature" and said: "I'm not going to be part of sacrificing that."

But Mr Meiring, who said he "nearly had a heart attack" when he saw press reports on the proposals, also emphasised that he wanted to see a deal negotiated with Mr Wiehahn.

This could possibly involve permission to develop portion seven of the property, the area closest to Camps Bay, in exchange for donating the rest of the land for incorporation into the new Cape Peninsula National Park.

"I want to make my position very clear. I am all in favour of a negotiated deal and I feel very seriously that I would much rather sacrifice, say 5% – just to give a figure, now to achieve the conservation of the remaining 95% in perpetuity.

"But I am not for a ribbon development. I cannot stress enough: we are extremely fortunate in the Western Cape to have one of the most important landmarks in the world within the boundaries of the city.

"And we can never allow this natural splendour of Cape Town, which really is the crux of the city's attractiveness from a tourism point of view, to be lost."

Kobus Meiring: 'no ribbon development'

Referring to Mr Wiehahn's offer to subsidise low-cost housing in disadvantaged areas in exchange for being allowed to develop a substantial section of the property – including high-density housing along 4km of Victoria Drive – Mr Meiring said he was "all in favour" of building houses for the poor.

"This is very important, but not at the cost of the Western Cape's most important characteristic. To change the rest of the Atlantic seaboard into another Monte Carlo is just too ghastly to contemplate."

He said that R2-billion – Mr Wiehahn's offer to subsidise housing – was significant, but it was also "easy to play with figures".

"If we can really get our gambling board going, there will be R2-billion straight away, although that would not be used only for housing."

If permission was granted to develop portion seven of the Oudekraal property, it would have to done in a sensitive and environmentally friendly way and would have to take cognisance of the existence of the kramat and graves, he said.

Mr Meiring said he would invite Mr Wiehahn to resume talks.

■ In a joint statement yesterday, three Western Cape provincial ministers – Kobus Meiring, Cecil Herandien and Michael Louis – said they had noted Mr Wiehahn's offer of R2-billion for low-cost housing in return for development rights at Oudekraal.

They fully supported the principle of tapping part of the proceeds of upmarket development to help in addressing the province's many social problems.

"But, given the desperate situation of masses of low-income or jobless people in the Western Cape and the country as a whole, unrealistic expectations which may be created by an 'announcement' of this kind can have disastrous effects in terms of potential takers moving to the metropolitan area and the Western Cape as a whole," they warned.

Oudekraal: Pay me to go away

(56)

JOSEPH ARANES
STAFF REPORTER

Oudekraal owner Kasper Wiehahn says his controversial proposal to develop the land between Camps Bay and Llandudno on the slopes of the Twelve Apostles is not cast in stone and he is prepared to move off the mountain – if he is paid R2-billion.

Cape Town city planner David Daniels says speculation about any development on the property is premature as no formal application has been submitted to the council or any other body for approval.

And the Western Cape government has categorically rejected any "ribbon development" along Victoria Drive, as envisaged in Mr Wiehahn's latest proposals.

Provincial Environment Minister Kobus Meiring said he would definitely not allow the coastal strip in the foothills of the Twelve Apostles to be "sacrificed".

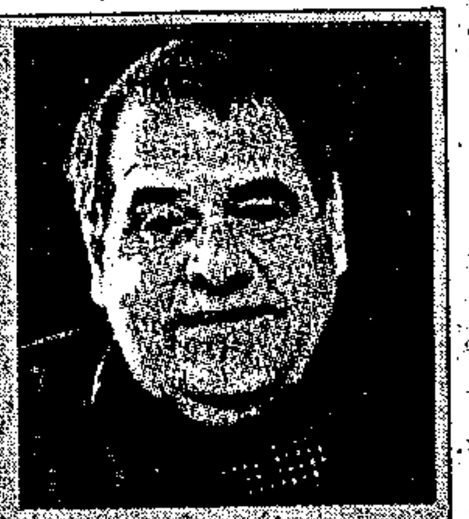
But Mr Meiring emphasised that he wanted to see a deal negotiated with Mr Wiehahn, and that this could be permission to develop the part of his property closest to Camps Bay – portion seven – in exchange for donating the rest of the land for conservation.

INSIDE

'I won't sacrifice nature', page 3

Oudekraal egg-dance, page 8

Wiehahn Q&A, page 8



Give me R2-bn: Wiehahn

But Mr Wiehahn said the development "is not a must" and if all the people of Cape Town felt it should not go ahead, he would hold back until they decided otherwise.

"Those who feel Oudekraal must not be developed, must buy the land or make alternative land with the same market value available for this development," he said.

"The idea of a land swop has been discussed with SA National Parks, the Cape Metropolitan Council and the provincial government.

"Unfortunately, none of these bodies came forward with a concrete alternative.

"But I'm prepared to leave the development alone and sell the land for R2-billion," said Mr Wiehahn.

National Parks spokesman David Daitz confirmed a land swop had been raised in the past, but he felt it was an "empty offer".

"The problem with a deal like that is that we all have different perceptions about the value of the land and how that figure is reached. Last year, Mr Wiehahn was prepared to accept R1-billion."

Mr Daitz said that even if such a deal was accepted, which was not impossible, it would be difficult to negotiate a settlement as he was sure Mr Wiehahn would not accept land in the Karoo, for example.

Mr Daniels said the concept of the new proposal, development rights in exchange for funding low-cost housing, was the subject of a meeting between Mr Wiehahn, himself and Cape Town city manager Andrew Boraine in August.

"After the discussion, Mr Wiehahn promised to put this idea in writing, which

ARG 2/10/98

To page 3

Controversial Wiehahn deal is 'not set in stone'

From page 1

he did, and we will respond to him formally in the next few days."

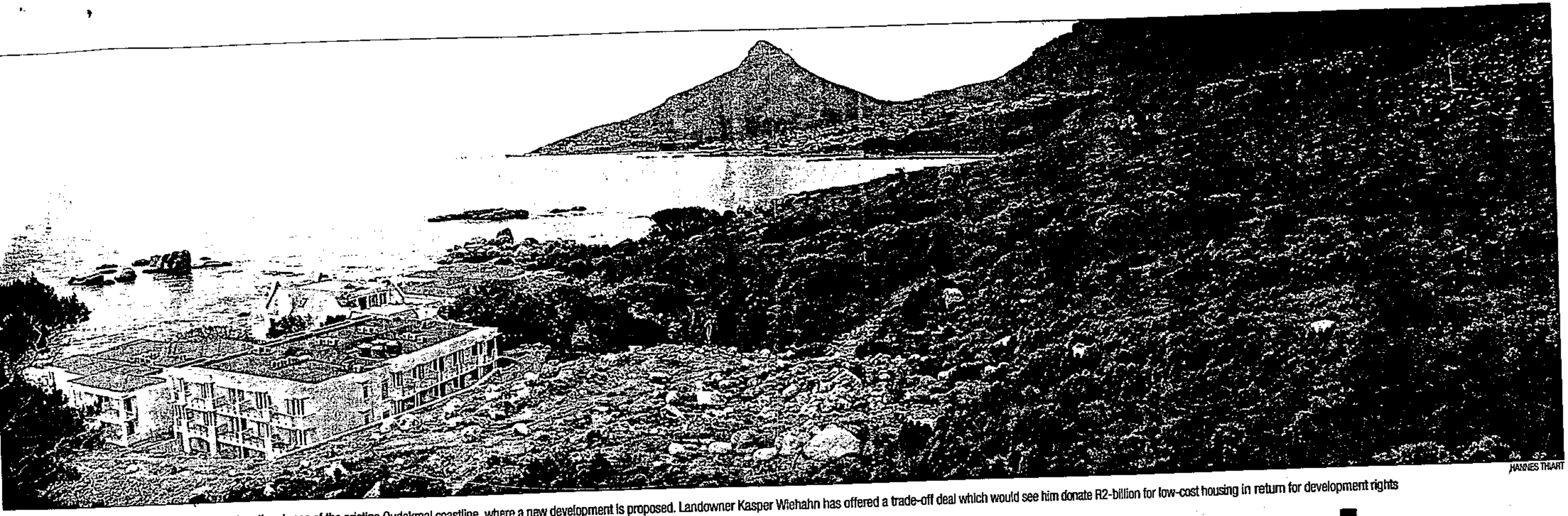
Mr Daniels said there was nothing wrong with the principle of using development profits to cross-subsidise housing and other upgrading projects, but the development proposal could be looked at only when formal applications had been lodged.

"Oudekraal is an extremely sensitive environmental site and we are applying to have the whole mountain chain declared a world heritage site.

"There is also huge public interest and before any approval can be given there will have to be extensive and intensive public participation."

Mr Wiehahn said the new constitution gave all citizens a voice and the right to vote on issues.

"If the majority of the people are against the development, I will hold it back, do a land swop or sell the property. But it can't be expected of me to walk away from a business proposition empty-handed," he said.



HANNES THIART

Land in the limelight: the new Oudekraal Hotel on the slopes of the pristine Oudekraal coastline, where a new development is proposed. Landowner Kasper Wiehahn has offered a trade-off deal which would see him donate R2-billion for low-cost housing in return for development rights

Politicians do the Oudekraal egg-dance

(66) ARG 2/10/98

INSIDE STORY

Politicians have reacted with caution to the latest Oudekraal proposal, writes Political Reporter **ANDREA WEISS**

In some parts of Cape Town, Table Mountain is a distant landmark, just as brick-and-mortar housing is an almost unattainable dream. This is where the pong of open drains hangs over higgledy-piggledy shacklands and toddlers scrabble in the dirt, their only entertainment perhaps a blaring radio.

On the far side of that mountain landmark is another reality: Victoria Drive between Camps Bay and Llandudno.

Here your senses are assailed by the sound of crashing waves on a rocky shore, the tangy smell of salt mingling with the herbal scents of fynbos and the magnificent sight of Table Mountain's flank dipping into the sea. This is the natural beauty for which the Cape is famed; the goose that lays the proverbial golden egg.

It is this contradiction that lies at the heart of the political bombshell mega-landowner Kasper Wiehahn has dropped on Cape Town, striking a direct hit on the city's most tender spot by offering to put up R2-billion for low-income housing in exchange for development rights along the piece of pristine coastline which he owns. In a sense, Mr Wiehahn has done little more than put a bargaining chip on the table.

What now has to be seen is how the politicians and the people, who are soon to cast their votes for those very politicians, are likely to respond.

While Mr Wiehahn's offer may appear to be a crass attempt to bend the political ear of those who have the power to decide the future of this coastline, indications are that the politicians are listening intently.

Premier Gerald Morkel's first response was that the offer could not be rejected out of hand, with the rider: "As far as I'm concerned, we must have development, but not at the expense of the environment. This is the type of thing I would like to keep out of the political arena if I possibly can."

Other reaction from the ranks of the National Party in the province was similarly guarded, if open-ended.

Former planning minister Lampie Fick, whose portfolio is now agriculture and property management, said he believed "compromise on matters of development" was always better.

He said the principle of using the proceeds of a development at Oudekraal for housing poor people was good. "It should be considered."

But Mr Fick, too, expressed a cautionary rider: "I think it would be a mistake for political parties to jump in, like Patricia de Lille (of the Pan Africanist Congress) has already done. I think this matter needs to be considered by cool heads."

Environmentalist and Safety and Security Minister Mark Wiley described Mr Wiehahn's offer as "the first card in a very long process".

Of the R2-billion offer, he said: "I don't think one must get sidelined by kite-flying of this nature."

Planning Minister Michael Louis of the African Christian Democratic Party and the minister on whose desk such an application would land, said: "We have to look at it in a total context as there are a lot of role players ... We would need to make a generational decision because we are custodians of the land."

African National Congress provincial leader Ebrahim Rasool said: "The ANC is not going to look at the issue in a yes/no way. I think that what we would like to do is engage Mr Wiehahn."

Mr Rasool said they would ask Mr Wiehahn to address a meeting of the ANC alliance, including representatives of local and national government, to find out more about his proposal.

He noted that environmental impact and Muslim graves on the site were key elements in the debate.

But Mr Wiehahn's first port of call is local government and he has already flashed his idea past Cape Town city manager Andrew Boraine. The ANC-controlled council now awaits written application.

Saleem Mowzer, the city council's new executive committee chairman, said the politicians on the council could apply their minds only once they received an application, but he conceded it was time they formed a policy on the issue of "cross-subsidisation" from development projects.

He said the council had been in negotiations over the handover of land to the new national park and was in favour of an application to have Table Mountain declared a World Heritage Site. Also, there was the question of the Muslim graves and the kramats, which was highly sensitive.

> ***In a sense, Mr Wiehahn has done little more than put a bargaining chip on the table***

"The council's position was that we should not support any development along that coastline. That position has not changed," he said.

On national level, ANC spokesman Thabo Masebe said he did not believe a matter should be decided by how much money a developer had to offer if there were environmental or other considerations. Policy and principle should take precedence.

But, what of the burgeoning housing needs of this city of three million?

Provincial chief director of housing John Africa believes the city's backlog is in the region of between 100 000 and 200 000 houses. He concedes that the bulk of provincial housing money has been spent outside the metropolitan area, which is beset with problems of land invasion and illegal occupation of new housing.

But he said the province was working with local authorities on a "rapid land release" programme and cash-flow projections to begin to tackle the city's housing needs.

Mr Africa said cross-subsidisation was a way of topping up housing subsidies, but this would have to be done on a sustainable basis. Sustainable, by his definition, was not a one-off.

"If you do it now, you have got to do it tomorrow and the day after. If you do it for one, you have to do it for another."

He said the possibility of building in a cross-subsidisation component into all developments should be looked at as a principle, but, "at this stage, I'm not enthusiastic about the subsidy of low-cost housing being used as a lever to get development rights".

It has been suggested that Mr Wiehahn's proposal has the potential to fracture Cape Town's already disparate communities.

On one hand, there is the desperate shortage of housing for the poor; on the other, there are those whose concerns might be characterised as "bunny hugging", but who also have a valid argument about Cape Town's need to protect its tourism industry.

Then there's the question of the Muslim graves close to Camps Bay complicating any development permutation one might come up with in an attempt to come to an acceptable agreement with Mr Wiehahn.

Plan greeted with caution

'I want harmonious development'

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Plan greeted with caution

MLAMLI MANELI
STAFF REPORTER

Housing remains a priority for the poor in Cape Town, but the proposal to provide R2-billion for low-income housing in exchange for development at Oudekraal has been treated with caution by potential beneficiaries.

In a snap survey in Guguletu, Khayelitsha and Mitchell's Plain, many people were sensitive to the fact that there were Muslim graves in the area and also that traditional healers gathered herbs there.

Others agreed the idea was good in principle, but said there should be consultation and negotiation.

South African National Civics Organisation member Timothy Mbalo said all stakeholders should discuss the proposal. The idea was good, but "we must not be misled by individuals who want personal gain at the expense of other people".

Mr Mbalo is responsible for housing in the Guguletu Sanco branch.

A colleague, who did not wish to be named, said there should be respect for the rights of the Muslim community whose graves would be "trampled on by people with money who have no respect for the cultures of other people".

She said traditional healers found herbs on the mountain. "We are not even sure of the authenticity of this proposal and we will be regarded as liars by the communities we represent once we raise their hopes."

Stanford Mpili of the Green Point informal settlement in Khayelitsha said healers should look elsewhere for herbs. "Most black people are staying in shacks and need development, no matter how little," he said.

Lawrence Ngubane of Khayelitsha said development needed priority because people had been waiting for a long time for housing.

'I want harmonious development'

q&a

New development proposals for the Oudekraal property on the Twelve Apostles between Camps Bay and Llandudno have roused fierce debate about conserving our natural heritage.

Oudekraal owner Kasper Wiehahn is proposing high-density housing along a 4km stretch above Victoria Drive in exchange for his giving more than R2-billion for low-cost housing.

JOSEPH ARANES spoke to Mr Wiehahn ...

What is your personal affinity to Table Mountain – do you go for walks there, spend time there thinking or drive by, taking in the views?

I work 12 to 14 hours a day, seven days a week. For me, time is of the essence. When I do have time, I love touring the Peninsula to appreciate the values it still has.

Do you not feel the development will help to further destroy an important piece of Cape Town's heritage?

I did not place the rights on the land. The previous owner, Sir Henry Phillip Price, applied for the rights and they were given to him by a former administrator of the Cape.

We bought the land with the attached rights in 1964.

For the past 30 years, this question never surfaced, but we have held discussions with town planners from South Africa, France and Germany on how best to develop it.

One thing I have always said is that I don't want the land cut up to allow 1 000 individual building ideas springing up ... I want a total harmonious development.

I don't believe the proposals we plan to put forward will destroy the land on the Twelve Apostles. In fact with this development, the beauty of the area will be expanded and will enable more people to enjoy the views of the bay and the mountain.

What do you think of the views of the environmental lobby groups, and the Muslim community regarding the old graves on the site?

There is no doubt and it is vital and important to have environmentalists involved and participating in this project.

Together with South African National Parks, the National Monuments Council and all levels of government, the environmentalists must be involved in the total planning of this project.

Regarding the Muslim community, my personal opinion is that the previous government has done very little towards protecting the heritage of this community.

I don't think the new Government has the time either to do anything.

We've got to recognise the importance of the Muslim shrine at Oudekraal.

My duty to the future is to enhance the shrine. Here I'm speaking about spending money to upgrade it and the access to it, enabling it to become a monument, not only to the Muslim community, but to the whole of the country. This must be done in conjunction with them.

With regard to the other graves in the ravine between land portions five and six, I believe they, too, should be upgraded and made more accessible ... all at my cost. We can even establish a museum there to exhibit the religion and the Muslim community's cultural heritage.

The graves area can be transformed into a garden which will hold pride of place in the Muslim community and be of interest to visitors.

I don't believe in the necessity of moving any of the graves.

Your proposal includes paying an amount of money, from the sale of the property, into a special fund for the construction of housing in disadvantaged areas. Exactly what percentage of the individual properties selling prices will go into this fund and how much money will you be making?

Portions six, five, four and three of the land will give us at least 1 000 erven.

The rights on these will have to be carefully placed to ensure we can build single and flat dwellings, possible light commercial development and shopping facilities.

Man in the middle: land owner and property developer Kasper Wiehahn outside his Bloubergstrand office

ANDREW INGRAM

The value of the erven will naturally be dependent on the rights placed on the erven.

I'm hopeful that after paying for bulk infrastructure like water, electricity and roads we will be able to produce a figure of between R1,5-billion to R2-billion.

I have taken note that the media refers to this as being about 50% of the proceeds. I can guarantee that this amount will be far more than 50% of the net value obtained.

Will the money be paid upfront into the housing fund once you have been given approval or will it be staggered as the development unfolds?

In our proposal, we believe that in conjunction with the Government and local authorities, we will be able to pre-determine possible buyers and investors. The interest of these potential buyers and investors is very high and the sale of the erven will happen very quickly.

All this means that the proceeds for the underprivileged housing scheme can happen very soon after we get the necessary approvals.

Who are the underprivileged people with whom you have had discussions in the past two years?

Due to my various business interests, I'm fortunate that I meet lots of people from various communities and from all walks of life.

I'm a good listener and quickly realised the shortcomings of the disadvantaged in the country.

I am not connected to a political party or other organisations and have spent my life looking after my career and trying to be successful in business. I have been fortunate in meeting all these people.

Why do you feel it is now your responsibility to be Cape Town's Robin Hood – taking from the rich to build houses for the poor?

President Mandela said the Government couldn't rectify the economic problems on its own.

He called on the private and business sectors, small and large entrepreneurs, to come forward in supporting the growth of the economy.

Business in the country has been good to us as a family for many years and we see it as our obligation to contribute towards the shortcomings of the country.

We have identified crime, unemployment and the lack of housing as the chief problems facing the country and the economy.

By developing Oudekraal, we will create job opportunities for 10 000 people, solve housing problems for 100 000 families and add stability to the economy.

With people in jobs and having decent roofs over their heads, crime will become secondary.

I believe the Oudekraal development will set a precedent, with other developers, organisations and individuals contributing to the economy in a similar way.

Notice

In terms of the provisions of Section 32(2) of the Western Cape Gambling and Racing Law, 1996 (Law 4 of 1996), as amended, the Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board hereby gives notice that an application for a licence in the following category has been received:

Manufacturer Licence

Name of applicant: Paul-Son Gaming Supplies, Inc

Reg. No: 98/03638/10

Shareholder: Wholly owned by Paul-Son Gaming Corporation
1 700 Industrial Road
Las Vegas
Nevada
89102
U.S.A.

Directors: Mr Paul S Endy and Mr Eric Endy

Business address: Deloitte & Touche
1 st Floor Sanclare
21 Dreyer Street
Claremont
7700

In the case of objections to the application, the grounds on which such objections are founded must be furnished. Where comment in respect of the application is furnished, full particulars and facts to substantiate such comment must be provided. The name, address and telephone number of the person submitting the objection or offering the comment must also be provided. Comments or objections must reach the Board not later than 16:00 on 26 October 1998.

Objections or comments can be sent to: The Chief Executive Officer, Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board, PO Box 8175, Roggebaai 8012 or handed to: The Chief Executive Officer, Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board, 8th Floor, Reserve Bank Building, 60 St George's Mall, Cape Town.

Telephone number: (021) 480-7400. Fax number: (021) 22-2603.

ERA – 10058

Down in the dumps over killer dust

BY FEMIDA CASSIM

Johannesburg may owe its existence to gold, but the debris left over from the mining activities is now causing major problems for those who live close to the mine dumps.

Burning eyes, sore ears, respiratory diseases like bronchitis, itching and lethargy are some of the ills that residents of Doornkop have been putting up with over the past seven years.

A mine dump about 100m away from Doornkop, also known as Snake Park, has been the cause of complaints ever since the township was established in 1991.

Antoinette Thusi (37), her husband and her three children, Precious, Portia and Goodwill (aged between 8 and 17), have lived in Doornkop since the previous government arranged for them to stay here.

From her house directly opposite the mine dump, Thusi complains: "We are not happy with this mine dump. It's not good for us, and it's worse for the kids because they like to play outside but they can't because the dust gets into their chests. We have no sewerage for our toilets or bathrooms. Our toilets are just holes in the ground and the taps are far."

As for plans to move out of Doornkop: "We have no option but to stay here because I used all my money to build my house," she says.

Sanny Makhura (20), who also lives opposite the dump, sweeps her front yard. "I'm sweeping all the the dust away. I don't like staying here, we can't breathe properly."

The dump, about 270 hectares in size, belongs to Durban Roodepoort Deep Mine (DRDM). According to the Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs, DRDM obtained the rights to create the dump in the 1960s.

While Adriaan Aucamp, head of Gauteng's sub-directorate of mine rehabilitation, inspects the area, he explains: "It is DRDM's obligation to look after this dump. It is a fixture – it is going to stay here for ever. It is still in use – not regularly – but all the structures are here. They should plant vegetation to stop the sand erosion.

MOUNTAIN OF SORROW: Community workers in Doornkop examine the dusty mine dump

"The dust's greatest impact is on adjacent areas – we do not allow development close to a mining dump because it is extremely dangerous; a home must be at least 100m away. The only way to solve problems like this is to grow vegetation. There's no way you can move these people from here," he says.

Robert Mbata, councillor for the Western Metropolitan Local Council, has been based in Doornkop for the past six years. "When the Transvaal Provincial Administration put people here, there was no survey of the place," he says. They contained the dust problem from the dump by planting grass. That stopped in 1993. The problem is now definitely worse. Our people are getting affected, especially the schoolchildren.

"We plan to grass the dump again but we do not have enough funds. We also asked for funds from private developers but nobody is prepared to offer anything. People from Doornkop, Dobsonville and Meadowlands are affected by this dust."

Elijah Zwane, chairperson of the council's health subcommittee, says: "For the seven years I have stayed here, I have been fighting illness. This dust is a killer. When I go to sleep, I itch. It burns the eyes. It is affecting the water. Our homes have to be cleaned twice a day. Our food gets coated with dust. We cannot keep water in the house for longer than six hours because after that it gets a layer of dust."

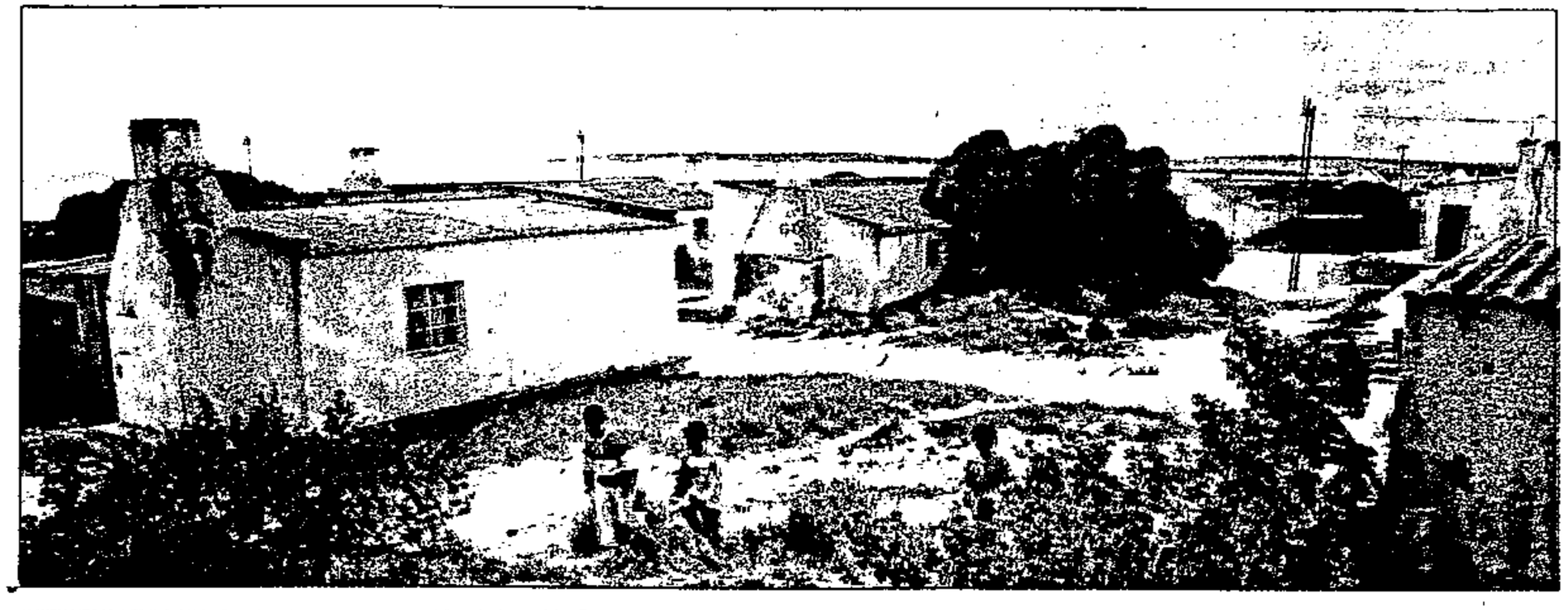
Jeremiah Mokoni (42) has been staying at Doornkop since 1991 with his wife, two children and other relatives. "The dust is affecting our eyes and ears badly. I cannot move out because I do not have enough money. I have already lost a lot of money by building my house and starting my business here."

As one drives through Doornkop, a wind thick with dust envelops you, making it very difficult to breathe.

cottages they have lived in for decades. Pieter Malan spoke to a resident who refuses to move

FISHERMAN: Hein 'Blaar' Brutus waits on the beach for his boat to return from a day's fishing

Pictures: ANDREW INGRAM



HISTORIC VILLAGE: the fishing village at 'Vaalplaas' in Paternoster where fishermen's cottages are up for sale

WON'T MOVE: Paternoster resident Selma Brutus, who claims that her father built their house

Fisher folk may lose their land

(56) ARG 3/10/98

PIETER MALAN

One of the last remaining "fisherman's villages" on the West Coast risks falling into the hands of the wealthy and losing its charming character.

Eleven fishermen families in Paternoster face eviction after the landowner decided to sell the properties at prices beyond their means.

Although the fishermen involved do not own the land their dwellings stand on, many of them claim that these houses were built by their fathers and grandfathers and that their families have been living there for decades.

Since the late 1920s, the Pharos, who own the land, had allowed fishermen who worked on their boats to build houses on their property – a part of Paternoster known among locals as "Vaalplaas".

But earlier this year, in what came as a shock to many, their houses were advertised to be sold as part of a "fisherman's village" development. Selma Brutus, whose father worked for the Pharos from the time he was a boy, said she had lived in one of these houses since she was born.

"My father built this house with his own hands just after my eldest brother was born. What is happening here is a disgrace," she said, vowing not to move out of the house.

In a cruel twist of fate, however, the people of Paternoster cannot be helped by any of the Government's programmes to help those dispossessed under apartheid.

Land claims commission spokesman Roger de la Harpe said as the people living at Vaalplaas have never been displaced under apartheid, the commission was powerless to do anything for them.

And because they are living in a town and not on a farm, they can't call on the Security of Tenure Act, which protects the rights of farmworkers.

Speaking on behalf of the Pharo family, André Pharo denied that the cottages had been sold. He said some people did, however, take options to buy some of the houses, should the proposed development go ahead.

Their plan was to maintain the character of the village by restoring the remaining cottages and building more of these houses. He denied that they planned to evict the people living in the houses without them having anywhere to go.

"We are well aware what a sensitive issue this is – one that could very easily get out of hand," he said.

"We also realise we have a commitment to people who have worked for our family and we have already indicated that we will make some contribution to them for the time they have worked for the family."

He said all the people who lived on the property already had houses through the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

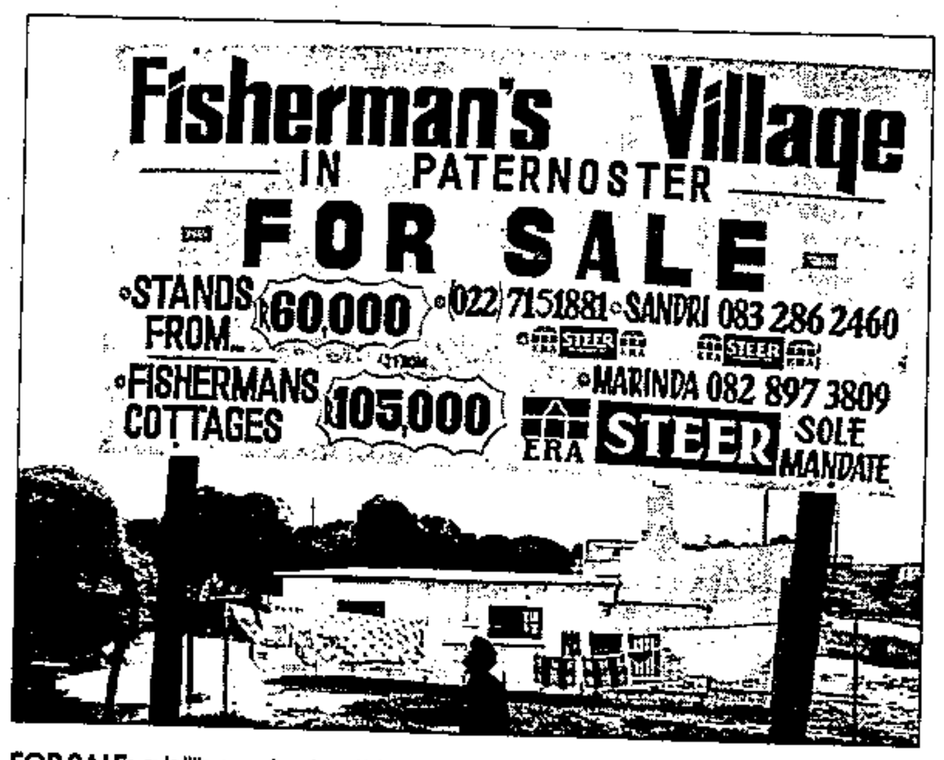
"To say that they have nowhere to go is, therefore, not true – in fact, many families who lived on our land have already moved into RDP houses," said Mr Pharo.

Charles McDonald, a lawyer acting on Ms Brutus' behalf, said he was still trying to establish how strong her claim was.

Eleven families in Paternoster face eviction from the historical West Coast fishermen's

Paternoster sale threatens village's soul

(56) ARG 3/10/98



FOR SALE: a billboard advertising the sale of Paternoster's cottages

PIETER MALAN

The booming voice of Selma Brutus, 51, fills the dining room of the typical West Coast *vissershuisie* (fisherman's cottage) in Paternoster.

It spills over into the next room and escapes through the open back door, floating out over the dunes towards the sea.

"I will not move out of this house, even if they sell it to the Queen."

Selma is voicing her anger at plans to sell off historic fishing cottages in the picturesque town.

Selling these would mean that some of the last *vissershuisies* in the area still in the hands of fishing families would be inhabited by holidaymakers for maybe a month a year.

Selma points towards some huge upmarket dwellings, all owned by "city folk and Transvalers".

"Look at those. If they're talking about conserving our heritage, why do they allow those to be built?"

Selma, as typical to the West Coast as *bokkoms* and *beskuit*, dyes her hair pinotage red and rolls her "r"s with a Weskus *brrry* you wish you could bottle and take home with you.

In 1928 her father Salie built the house we are sitting in – a house of the kind now studied by experts in "rural architecture".

Salie was a fisherman all his life, catching snoek and *kreef* and maasbanker during the fishing season and working as a builder when fish were scarce.

Salie was also, so Selma claims, related to the Pharos, a well-known local family. The Pharo family was for years involved in the local fishing industry, with several of Paternoster's fishermen, including her father and brother Hein, working for them.

Selma continues: "After my eldest brother was born, Gert Pharo – the grandfather of present Pharos – allowed my dad to build a house on his property."

And it is in this house that the family has lived in ever since and where she and eight other brothers and sisters were born.

In the same way, several other fishermen who worked for Gert Pharo were allowed to build houses on his property, known among locals as Vaalplaas.

After Salie died Gert Pharo's son, Joey, went to Salie's wife and told her that she should not worry about the future – that she could go on living in the house as she always had done.

"And when my mother died in 1987, Joey came to me and said to me, 'Selma, from today I don't want to hear people calling this house Annie's house. From today they must refer to this house as Selma's house'."

And then he added: "If you ever empty this house, it should be because you want to move out."

And on this basis Selma kept on living in the small whitewashed *vissershuisie* as always – paying neither for rent nor water. This arrangement continued under Joey's sons André and Gerard and their cousin Pierre.

Until a few months ago that is, when a billboard went up a few metres from her house, advertising a "Fisherman's Village for sale".

"After all these years my house has been sold, I hear, to an estate agent from Vredenburg. It is a disgrace." And like the 11 other families still living on Vaalplaas, Selma now faces the prospect of being forced to move out of the house of her birth into a "RDP house" on the outskirts of town.

Speaking on behalf of the Pharo family, André Pharo said they realised moving people out of their houses was an extremely sensitive issue, "one that could easily get out of hand, resulting in you sitting with your head in a beehive".

But, he added, all the families living on their property got new houses under the RDP scheme – in fact, many of them had already moved into these houses. But Selma countered this by saying: "Yes I do have a RDP house. But that house is for my children." And then, waving her hand across the dining room she said: "But this house is mine. The house that my father built."

But there is more at stake here than a few houses. A West Coast community is threatened. And though the houses may remain – they are after all protected by the National Monuments Act – the very heart of the community will be lost when the people move out.

Praise for controversial developer

Radio callers hail R2-billion housing offer in exchange for Oudekraal project

(66) ARG 3/10/98

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WARING

Kasper Wiehahn, the man behind the proposed controversial Oudekraal development on the slopes of the Twelve Apostles, appears to have successfully wooed Capetonians in need of houses.

Many callers to a Cape Talk radio phone-in show yesterday were quick to praise his "generosity" in offering R2-billion toward constructing low-cost housing in exchange for permission to develop a strip of land between Camps Bay and Llandudno.

Mr Wiehahn has said that his proposal is not cast in stone and that he would be prepared to give up his plan if he could get R2-billion for the pristine coastal land.

André, a caller from Blaauwberg, said it was great for a developer to think beyond just making money and to help improve the lot of the underprivileged.

Another caller hailed Mr Wiehahn as a "great man" to make money available to build 100 000 houses.

Mr Wiehahn told callers that the Oudekraal development would consist of a mix of single residential, low-rise, commercial and recreational components.

The land, bought in 1965, stretches along the Atlantic coastline from Camps Bay to Llandudno.

It is divided into portions, with that closest to Camps Bay (portion 7) originally zoned for single residential development.

Asked by a caller if he would consider a higher density development, Mr Wiehahn said in view of planning done 30 years ago he would probably look at three to four-storey buildings.

To develop the other portions, Mr Wiehahn will have to apply to the city council for approval and zoning.

He anticipates about 1 000 plots becoming available along the coast and suggested allocating a certain number for local buyers and for foreign buyers.

One of the critics of the scheme was Noseweek magazine editor Martin Welz, who questioned where the R2-billion would come from.

"R2-billion is an incredibly large amount of money," said Mr Welz.

The land had originally been bought cheaply as it had been zoned as poor quality agricultural land.

Mr Welz also criticised the fact that no concrete proposal had been put forward for the development.

A Camps Bay resident said a large development would worsen existing traffic conditions for commuters in and out of the city at peak hours.

Neil van der Spuy, of Llandudno, a former legal adviser to the Cape Metropolitan Council, said the residential zoning on the portion adjacent to Camps Bay had lapsed and Mr Wiehahn would have to re-apply for development rights.

ON THE AIR: Kasper Wiehahn

Tensions high as forest debate rages on

(56) CP 4/10/98

By PERCY MAKHARAMEDZHA

THE ROW over the destruction of South Africa's largest patch of KwaZulu-Natal coastal lowland, Dukuduku forest, is raging on.

As the bickering between nature conservationists and the 8 000-strong community of Dukuduku south continues, the forest is being stripped of its protected trees, animals and birdlife.

Dukuduku forest has two residential areas – one legal, the other illegal.

Separated by the Mtubatuba/St Lucia road, the north side is an established residential area given to the original Dukuduku inhabitants as part of land redistribution in 1992.

Dukuduku south is occupied by people who refused to relocate to the north of the forest.

It is also occupied by thousands of people from different areas – including illegal immigrants – who have settled in Dukuduku south to escape the violence that has torn apart their communities in strife-ridden KwaZulu-Natal, and to work in St Lucia and the neighbouring sugar cane and pine tree plantations.

Conservationists want the Dukuduku forest invaders to vacate this valuable natural resource.

With the backing of organisations such as the Wildlife and Enviroment Society, conservationists are lobbying for national and international support in their bid to get the forest-dwellers evicted.

With tensions increasing in the area, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Traditional and Enviromental Affairs has instructed the provincial Nature Conservation Services, formerly known as the Parks Board, not to enter the forest until a solution is found.

Lying between Mtubatuba and the tourism town of St Lucia, Dukuduku is facing an uncertain future.

The forest is a hive of activity. Axe and chainsaw-wielding dwellers can be seen cutting down trees for firewood while others carry hoes to cultivate their crops.

Those who have just moved into the forest are clearing bush away by the slash-and-burn method to create space to build houses.

Conservationists are concerned that some of the forest's dwellers are illegal immigrants who are contributing to Dukuduku's destruction because they are using the trees to make charcoal which is being sold at prominent shops around St Lucia.

The controversy at Dukuduku dates back to 1990 when six men were convicted for occupying the state forest illegally. The men were fined R1 000 and ordered to vacate the forest by August 1990.

At the time, about 2 500 people were living in the forest which forms part of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park.

The authorities have applied to have the park declared a World Heritage Site.

Following intensive negotiations, about 850 families agreed to move to the north of the forest after being promised title deeds to a half a hectare of land.

Conservation ecologist, Richard Boon, says the Wildlife and Enviroment Society is giving the Dukuduku matter national attention.

"We want a solution now. There is no other solution but for the forest invaders to move out so that our natural heritage can be safeguarded.

"We have to look after the resource because it attracts tourists who create jobs," he said.

But Ngubane believes the issue of the Dukuduku forest is more complex than what many people believe.

"It is not simply a matter of moving people to the north of the Mtubatuba/St Lucia road with its barren plantation land and highly-valued trees.

"Neither is it simply a matter of buying two farms near Mondi for millions of rands."

The MEC said concerned organisations have never discussed the issue with him or suggested any well-researched solutions.

Conservationists accuse Ngubane of ignoring their suggestion that the government buy land for the Dukuduku forest invaders.

A Dukuduku south family, who preferred to remain anonymous, said they were willing to negotiate with the government but ruled out any possibility of moving out of the forest.

The family claimed it was their ancestral land which the "whites" wanted to take away from them for economic reasons.

Family members said they were planning to develop the area they occupied into a booming tourist attraction.

The family also revealed that the Dukuduku south community planned to build five schools and a clinic in the forest. Children living in the forest currently attend schools under trees.

The Dukuduku south community has applied in vain to get water, electricity and roads.

In a previous attempt to evict the Dukuduku forest dwellers, a bloody conflict erupted that resulted in the death of one of the squatters.

Ngubane described the Dukuduku situation as volatile and blamed this on past history that had seen many people forcibly removed from their land.

"My intention has always been to find a win-win solution which must have the support of the people in the forest and conservationists," he said.

Ngubane believes the eastern part of the forest should be incorporated into the Greater St Lucia Westland Park, and the western portion – up to the Mondi road – used for the formal, planned settlement of the people.

"Forced removal of the people is not an option," he said.

But conservationists believe the MEC's stance is "wrong" because the land invaders are people who refused to move to the northern part of the forest in 1990 where a fully-fledged settlement has been developed.

The dwellers said they would not leave the fertile forest where they are able to grow fruits and vegetables, and be moved to a settlement in a dry area that in the past had been a gum and pine tree plantation.

But a member of the Dukuduku north residents' committee, Phillip Mkhwanazi, was adamant that moving out of the forest would ensure forest dwellers get a better life.

As one of Dukuduku's original inhabitants, who defied the apartheid authority and returned to the forest in 1986 after being chased out during the implementation of the Group Areas Act, Mkhwanazi has learned to cohabit with the forest the hard way.

"We were forcibly driven out of the forest. Many of us ended up finding refuge at nearby farms where we worked under inhumane conditions. Other people left Dukuduku and settled in other areas. When we moved back into the forest, we were accused of illegal land invasion," Mkhwanazi said.

Negotiations regarding moving to Dukuduku north started in 1988, said Mkhwanazi, who added that the community spent more than R40 000 paying lawyers in a bid to secure their right to live in the forest.

"We won the case after we lodged a claim against being evicted from our ancestral land without being given another place to stay.

"After holding negotiations with government officials, we were promised this area and compensated R1 000 per family," Mkhwanazi said.

The Dukuduku community started moving across the road to settle in the northern part of the forest in 1992.

As Mkhwanazi pointed out, the area was developed with all basic necessities including electricity.

While Mkhwanazi emphasised that people who remained in the forest were still part of the Dukuduku community – sharing the schools and clinics – he condemned illegal invasion of the land.

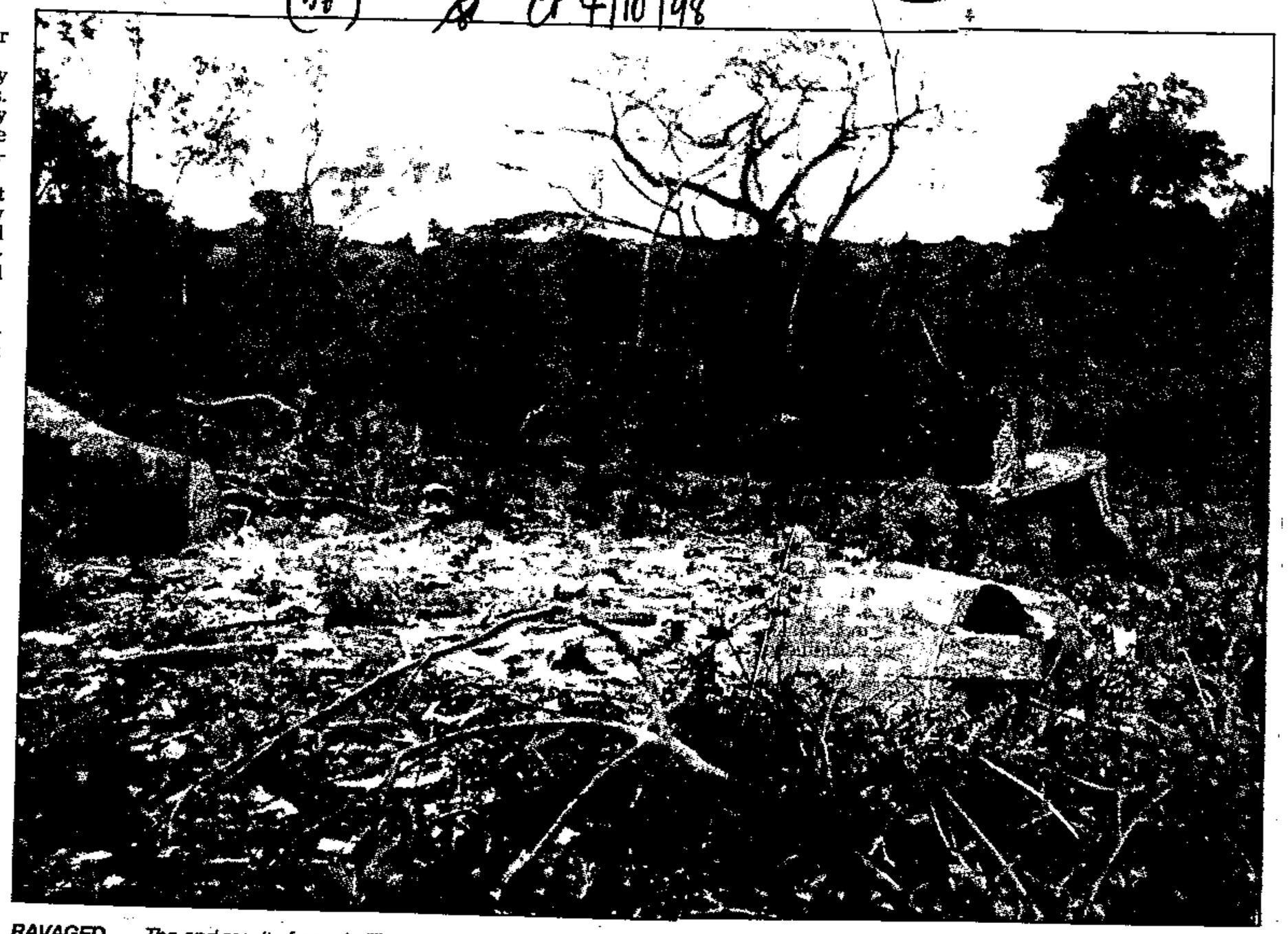
Mkhwanazi blamed "politicians who are sowing seeds of division between the Dukuduku south and north communities".

"This forest is our goldmine. We need it in the same vay we need St Lucia.

"It is a tourism attraction that will ensure people get jobs.

"We are urging people not to take the forest for granted and take politics seriously as they are just being used," Mkhwanazi said

EARNING A LIVING . . . Forest residents sell their fruit and vegetables.



RAVAGED . . . The end result of people 'illegally' occupying the region is the destruction of the valuable Dukuduku forest.

for help to tune into e.tv
call 083 913 1000 or visit the e.tv website at www.etv.co.za
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Park director 'misled' public

(56) ST 4/10/98

CHRIS BARRON

THE director of the Kruger National Park has admitted he misled the public when he denied a Sunday Times report that lions in the park were dying of bovine tuberculosis.

Park director David Mabunda admitted on Friday that lions were dying of the deadly and incurable disease — but said action would be taken against those who gave the information to the Sunday Times.

Mabunda said those who told the Sunday Times that lions were dying, and that the park had ignored warnings from the Department of Agriculture to erect fences to contain the spread of the disease, would be charged.

He refused to say who would be charged or what the charges would be. "It's a departmental matter," he said, adding that "people" had spoken to the Sunday Times without authorisation.

It is believed Mabunda was referring to Dr Johan Krige, a director of animal health at the Department of Agriculture, who told the Sunday Times that lions were "dying like flies" from bovine tuberculosis. Krige denied he did not have the authority to speak to the Sunday Times. He said that as acting director of animal health, he was authorised to speak to the press.

Mabunda's admission that TB was killing lions in the park is a startling turnaround. Following the Sunday Times front-page report last week, he and senior Kruger Park veterinarian Dr Douw Grobler were quoted in The Citizen newspaper and on Radio 702 denying that lions had died and were dying of bovine tuberculosis.

Mabunda used Radio 702 to deny the Sunday Times story by saying not a single lion had died of the disease. Grobler assured The Citizen that: "No lion has died of TB in the park yet."

Vets involved in testing for the disease laughed in disbelief at the comments of the two men.

"The lions are dying in front of our eyes," said Dr Kobus du Toit, chairman of the SA Veterinary Association's wildlife group.

And on Friday Mabunda admitted that post mortems showed that infected lions in the park had died and were dying from the disease.

According to a report by Dr Dewald Keet, chief state veterinarian for the Kruger Park, and Professor Nick Kriek, head of pathology in the faculty of veterinary science at Pretoria University, 70 out of 80 lions tested in the southern part of the Kruger Park since 1995 were found to be terminally ill with bovine tuberculosis.

There are about 1 000 lions in the Kruger Park.

The University of Cape Town is committed to policies of equal opportunity and affirmative action which are essential to its mission of promoting critical inquiry and scholarship.

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International team to study Kruger beasts' TB

A study of bovine tuberculosis (BTB) has begun in the Kruger National Park following a recent outbreak of the disease, KNP director David Mabunda said yesterday.

The survey aims to find out more about the disease, its geographic spread through the park and the risk to animals.

Buffaloes are the carriers of the disease, and other animals can contract it through contact with infected beasts.

The survey will be conducted by KNP staff; the animal health directorate; the Agricultural Research Council; Pretoria, California and Davis universities; as well as the Smithsonian Institute in the US.

The bacterium that causes BTB also causes TB in humans.

BTB was first found in KNP buffaloes in 1991, and since then up to 89% of herds in the southern part of the park have been infected. However, herds in the north are relatively unaffected.

A total of 600 buffaloes have been removed to monitor the disease, Mabunda said.

The "spill-over" from diseased buffaloes to other species was also under investigation.

TB-infected lions, kudus, baboons, leopards and cheetahs have been found in high-prevalence BTB areas. – Sapa

(56) Star 5/10/98

Boraine pours cold water on R2-bn offer by Oudekraal man

Council raises concerns

(56)

ARG 6/10/98

JOSEPH ARANES
STAFF REPORTER

Oudekraal owner Kasper Wiehahn's financial calculations for the development of the land and his R2-billion offer to fund low-cost housing are over-optimistic and do not hold water, says Cape Town city manager Andrew Boraine.

Mr Boraine says the lack of housing for the city's homeless will not be remedied by money alone.

After a barrage of media reports on Mr Wiehahn's proposal to develop the pristine 4km stretch of mountain land between Camps Bay and Llandudno, Mr Boraine said that while the council approved in principle the concept of developers helping to pay for housing in disadvantaged areas, this could not be linked to planning approval.

He said the council executive committee would discuss Mr Wiehahn's idea today after having informed him of some of the council's reservations.

"In 1996 the council decided that the subdivision of portion 7 of the Oudekraal property, closest to Camps Bay, had lapsed," said Mr Boraine.

"The engineering plans then submitted by Mr Wiehahn were not considered and it is our opinion that a new application for the sub-division of the land should be submitted if he wishes to develop this portion of land.

"The remaining land is zoned as rural property, and for any development to take place there rezoning applications must be submitted. To date, we have not received any applications."

In its letter to Mr Wiehahn the council said that, while it took any proposal to solve the housing backlog seriously, there were several concerns.

These included outstanding legal issues over development rights on the land, the financial calculations made available through the media and planning and environmental concerns.

Mr Boraine said: "Housing may be the city's number one priority, but this need should not be played up against the need to protect our natural environment and it can't be solved at the expense of the environment either.

"Pumping more money into the housing problem will not speed up the delivery of houses, as issues like the size of houses conflicts within communities and administrative hitches within the system are compounding the problems."

He added: "While we welcome the intense public debate about Oudekraal, which will inevitably be resolved politically, there is a real need for environmental protection on one hand and the need to address the serious problems of poverty and housing."

NE

LITICAL ISSUE'

Wiehahn offer

CT 6/10/98

Tech 'let down' in Granger Bay deal

CHRIS BATEMAN

THE R300-million Granger Bay development, completed more than two years ago, was at one time subject to a R1m verbal agreement to subsidise disadvantaged students at the Cape Technikon's Hotel School on the site.

This commitment — the extent of which is disputed by former Granger Bay developer Ian Hirschon — and several others made to former landowner Cape Technikon have not been met.

The agreements were not honoured because Hirschon's company, Equikor, which entered into a multi-layered agreement with the Cape Technikon, sold its development rights to Meyer Budow.

Theo Shippey, then-rector of the Cape Technikon but now retired, said last night he had been "disappointed and deeply saddened" as many verbal and written promises made by the developers had been broken.

"I was disturbed that we were not getting a fair deal, in spite of contractual undertakings," he said.

"There was clear understanding that there would be a partnership between the hotel school and the new hotel. We were to have some say in design and the way the hotel was operated so that a partnership could help train our students.

"To the best of my knowledge, this has not taken place."

These undertakings had been given in addition to the promises to subsidise students.

"It became a fight between us and the developers with long legal consultations. I became greatly disillusioned with developers' not understanding what education was about. I got the feeling they did not mean what they said and that money was the cardinal motivator and not just education. I believe we lost out badly."

Shippey said Budow had undertaken a "complicated deal".

"There were a dozen major clauses which he challenged us to litigate," he said.

According to John Neels, head of economic development, culture and sport for the SA National Civics Organisation (Sanco), which had been a facilitator in the deal with Hirschon, the subsidy agreement involved R1m and was verbal.

"It was partly our fault," Neels said. "We did not follow up after Budow's take-over, so the technikon subsidy scheme did not come about."

Hirschon said that the agreement had been "in principle". He said he could not recall — and would have to refer to documentation — the amount involved.

"There were a lot of integrated deals to suit various parties," Hirschon said.

All these obligations had been passed on to Budow's company.

Budow said that if he had been party to a written R1m subsidy agreement, "I'd like to see it".

"I'm a property developer and whatever agreements I enter, I do so in writing."

Of his part in the deal, Budow said: "Nothing was offered to the community."

Oudekraal owner's claim overstated — council

CT 6/10/98

THE CITY COUNCIL responded yesterday to the controversial Oudekraal trade-off development proposals. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

(56)

THE City Council has told Oudekraal owner Kassie Wiehahn that his claim of being able to donate R2 billion to low-cost housing is "overstated" and that his assumption that he has existing development rights on his property is wrong.

City Manager Andrew Boraine said yesterday he had written to Wiehahn to say that if he wanted to develop Oudekraal, he would have to start from scratch by lodging new development proposals with the city.

His previous development plans, passed in 1957, were invalid.

Wiehahn disputes this.

"Our response to Mr Wiehahn, dated October 5, points out that in our opinion his assumption that he had existing development rights is not correct. His financial projections appear to be overstated," Boraine said.

He told Wiehahn that if he submitted new development proposals, they would be subjected to an environmental impact assessment (EIA).

"All interested and affected parties will be identified and involved. Apart from extensive public participation, the EIA process will involve the Provincial Administration, the Cape Metropolitan Council and the City Council," he said.

If the EIA found that some of the Oudekraal land could be developed, Wiehahn would have to apply for rezoning and subdivision rights.

Wiehahn has offered the City Council a trade-off deal whereby he will donate R2bn to the city to build 100 000 low-cost houses for the poor if he is allowed to develop a thousand luxury houses on his Oudekraal property, stretching along the Atlantic coast from Camps Bay almost to Llandudno.

PROJECTIONS QUESTIONED: Andrew Boraine

'HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT': Kassie Wiehahn

Although the Oudekraal development issue fell within the council's jurisdiction, Boraine said they intended to work jointly with all spheres of government on the issue.

The council would approach Environment MEC Kobus Meiring and ANC Western Cape leader Ebrahim Rasool as they favoured a "multi-party approach" to issues of environmental protection and the provision of low-cost houses.

In Wiehahn's letter to the council, where he outlined his trade-off deal, he wrote: "Oudekraal is currently the most valuable estate land in South Africa. During the past 24 months overseas buyers have paid unheard of prices for properties on the Atlantic seaboard.

"We are only interested in developing Oudekraal on the basis that all portions should be planned in conjunction with each other to create a harmonious development and to achieve maximum conservation."

Wiehahn told the council he planned to develop 1 000 plots on the land stretching the entire length of the Oudekraal property, which he would sell for R1,5 mil-

❒ Turn to Page 3

Oudekraal

❒ from Page 1

lion each. Rezoning of the land to allow the development of flats and commercial building would increase the value of the plots by about R1m each. Profits on the building projects would bring in further R250m, and 1 000 "donations" of R500 000 each would bring in R500m. Spending on the project would amount to R500m, leaving a net income of R2bn.

Wiehahn wrote: "Should the Cape Metropolitan Council/Government hand land in, for example, Guguletu, Khayelitsha over to the developer to develop economic housing at R20 000 per house, we should be able to build approximately 100 000 houses.

"The unemployed, homeless and underprivileged part of our population will support this project. "This is the largest donation ever, which will create work and solve our housing problem at no cost to the CMC or government."

Wiehahn suggested various options on the deal to the council:

- If the government contributed R10 000 to each low-cost house, they could push the number of houses built up to 200 000.
- The 100 000 low-cost houses could be sold for R20 000 each with a bond over 20 years at a low interest rate (10%) granted by the developing firm, which would build another 100 000 houses over 20 years.
- The council could sell 40% of the low-cost houses and charge rental for 60%, which would generate more income for further low-cost houses to be built.

"This project is never ending and should solve the housing problem in Cape Town," he wrote.

Wiehahn also discussed with the council the possibility of extending the Oudekraal development onto state land adjacent to his property. This means the luxury housing development would extend to Llandudno.

MAIL & GUARDIAN
November 6 to 12 1998

Gray bankrolled ANC Youth League

M+G 6-12/10/98 (56)

Justin Arenstein

Mpumalanga's suspended parks board chief, Alan Gray, appears to have used state funds to bankroll his political allies in the African National Congress and its affiliates.

New documentary evidence indicates that the Mpumalanga Parks Board paid a portion of the criminal legal expenses of Gray's closest political ally, provincial ANC Youth League secretary general James Nkambule, last year.

Invoices in the possession of the *Mail & Guardian* indicate that Gray authorised the parks board to pay attorney Nico Fourie R1 460 in June 1997. Fourie defended Nkambule in an arson case brought by the fiery politician's uncle. Nkambule was acquitted.

There is also evidence that the board paid various vehicle expenses for Nkambule and that it irregularly awarded him a R40 000 contract for community liaison work while he was still a board member.

Some of the funding to Nkambule and other as yet unidentified politicians was illegally channelled through a secret and highly illegal bank account in White River. The account appears to have been held in the name of a private company but received all its funds directly from the parks board.

Nkambule's legal and vehicle expenses were not channelled through the account and were instead simply pushed through the board's own books.

At least one ANC Youth League conference was also financed through a parks board credit card in the name of Gray's secretary, Debbie Burnett.

Although neither the ANC Youth League nor government investigators would confirm the funding, Judge Willem Heath hinted that it was being investigated when he announced this week that fraud charges would be brought against Gray and a number of unidentified politicians.

Heath said his team had uncovered sufficient evidence to warrant a formal police fraud probe into alleged double bookkeeping, illegal bank accounts and misappropriation of state funds.

He refused to expand on this and his Mpumalanga investigation manager, Jonathan Dutton, would only confirm that five files of evidence had been handed to police.

An unrelated forensic audit report of the parks board by the Department of Environmental Affairs is, however, even more damning. The five-volume report has been handed to the new MEC for Environmental Affairs, Fish Mahlalela, but is being kept under tight wraps.

The independent auditors who conducted the three-month probe, ICS, refused to discuss its contents but described the report as "dynamite" and confirmed that it implicated a number of leading politicians in questionable expenditure.

The audit was initially commissioned to probe more than R20-million of secret facilitation payments by the parks board on behalf of ousted environmental MEC David Mkhwanazi, and reportedly confirms that a helicopter partnership between Mkhwanazi and Gray benefited from government contracts.

The detailed report also allegedly maps how other companies linked to politicians and officials were fed government contracts, and how the salaries of politicians' relatives were paid with state funds. — African Eye News Service

We are in control of invasives at Sandy Bay – fynbos expert

(56)

Interference 'a threat' to parks professionals

ARG 7/10/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

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This warning comes from Brian van Wilgen, one of South Africa's leading fynbos experts.

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Most of the interference is in the form of time-consuming phone calls.

Reasons range from ignorance – people complaining about the removal of invasive alien vegetation – to well-meaning but misguided advice, such as telling parks officials to leave the alien trees because biological control agents will do the job for them.

(An introduced fungus is having a major impact on seed production of alien Port Jackson Acacia trees, but most of the invasives at Sandy Bay are rooikrans Acacias, a different species for which there is no biological control agent.)

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Dr Van Wilgen, scientific adviser to the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's Working for Water programme, was commenting after being asked to report on concerns about clearing operations to remove invasive vegetation from Sandy Bay.

This area is now a key element of the new national park.

He reported being "more than satisfied" by clearing operations at Sandy Bay.

"The staff in charge have decades of experience in the management of alien plant invasions," he said.

There were a range of permutations of alien plant control methods – including mechanical removal, fire, herbicide treatment, follow-up weeding by hand and biological control – and there was no "right" method, Dr Van Wilgen stressed.

The prognosis for cleared sites at Sandy Bay was good, he continued.

"Although places like this may currently resemble the site of an ecological disaster to the lay observer, they can recover in time.

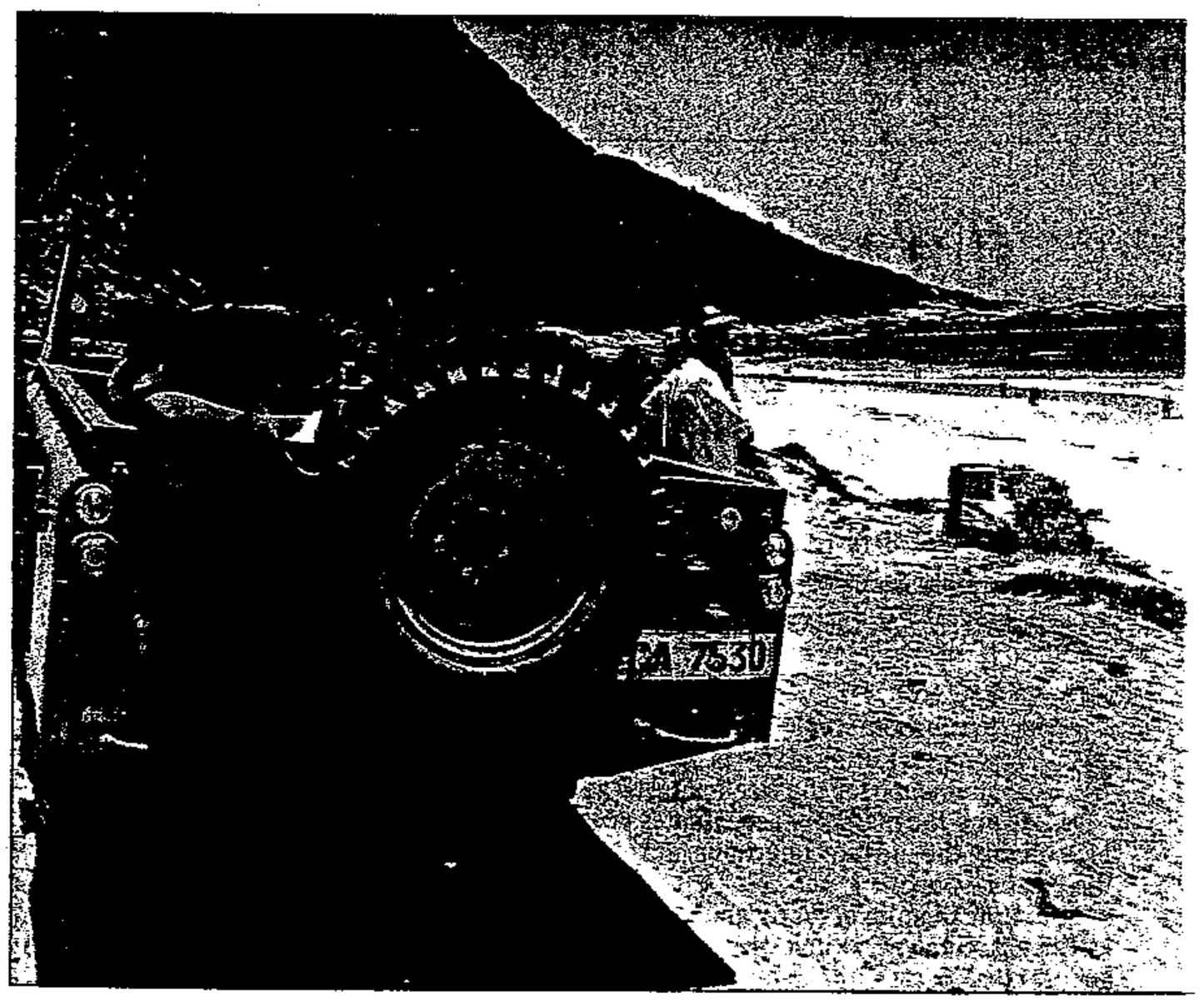
"One only has to look at areas that were cleared of similar infestations in the Cape of Good Hope nature reserve 20 years ago to see what can be achieved."

Dr Van Wilgen said the capacity of national parks staff to manage the Peninsula's ecosystems was being seriously threatened by public interference.

"When there is finally a holistic approach to the management of the Peninsula – a need recognised and called for for decades – it seems that the Cape Town public do not trust the professionals who have been appointed to carry out this management.

"National Parks staff are constantly having to deal with hundreds of issues being raised – much of it based on mistrust or personal agendas."

Dr Van Wilgen said he believed the national parks staff were doing "a thoroughly professional job" in the Peninsula.



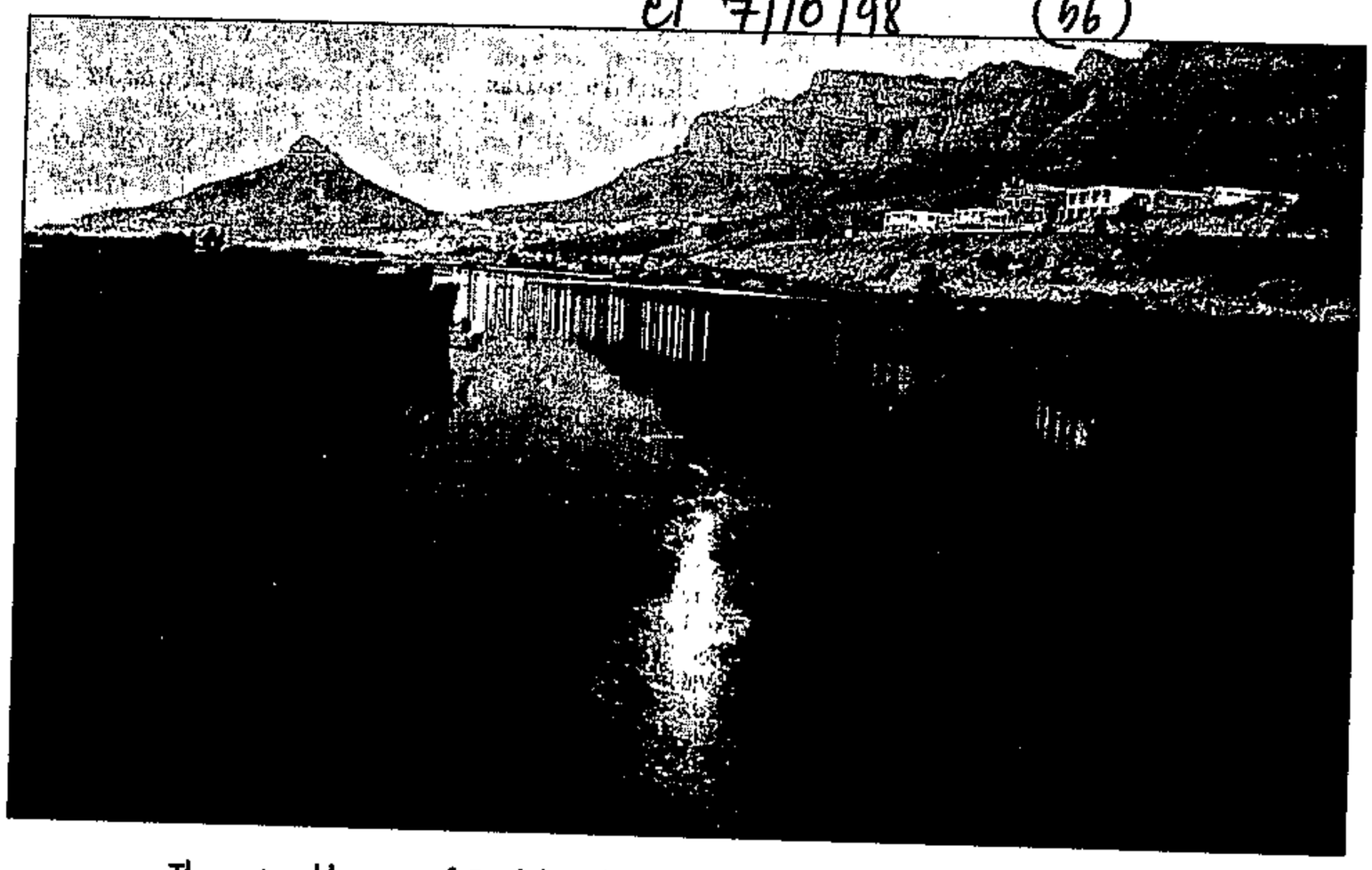
Sandy Bay: 'the capacity of SA National Parks staff to manage Peninsula ecosystems is being threatened by public interference'

Dash of cold water on Oudekraal

CT 7/10/98 (56)

TONY WEAVER

Kassie Wiehahn's Oudekraal proposal is a non-starter and will never happen. But it raises serious questions about the future which need to be addressed now. Weaver muddies the waters by offering him R153 million for the land.



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It's time to throw a couple of buckets of cold water on the whole sordid process and look at the facts:

- Neither Michael Jackson nor Elvis Presley is a potential investor in Oudekraal.
- At this moment, Kassie Wiehahn has no development rights whatsoever, beyond the erection of a few farmhouses and labourers' cottages, and even they are uncertain.
- There has been absolutely no negotiation between Wiehahn and the Cape Town City Council. The sole extent of interaction has been a 45-minute meeting between Wiehahn and City Manager Andrew Boraine, a skimpy proposal just over a page in length and a noncommittal letter sent by Boraine to Wiehahn on Monday. There is no plan.

Just as a bucket of cold water thrown over a hunting dog on the track of a muishond becomes nothing more than an empty bucket, so Wiehahn's proposals are little more than empty rhetoric.

I phoned him up the other night. He was very disarming and charming. I had a mental image of a pipe-smoking, rugby-loving, cravat-wearing former Matie Nationalist who now donates money to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund and bounces ideas off black guests at fundraisers. That way he learns a lot from the underprivileged.

"Everybody has to be concerned about what they can give to their country. The fauna and flora of the mountain are very important, but humanity is also very important," he says.

Then I offered him R153 million for the land.

That's the figure I have been told he is holding out for as the trade-off for dropping his development plans.

"I'm having dinner with Anton Rupert next week (I lied). How about if I ask him to give you R153m cash in exchange for you ceding the land to the National Parks Board?"

He hesitated for a fraction of a second. "Well, you know, a lot of people are phoning. Kobus Meiring is seeing me. I am leaving the door open for an exchange of land, but there is not a lot of land in South Africa that can command the kind of price that Oudekraal can."

Then he switched into PC mode. "The question is, am I right in making a decision all on my own or must I consult the people of Cape Town?"

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"I had a 45-minute meeting with him and that was the only contact we have had with him, nothing else. That was the sum involvement of the city in this thing.

"He presented us with a one-and-one-third page outline. There is no proposal to develop Oudekraal beyond the concept idea to generate funds for low-cost housing: By law, we cannot take into consideration money for low-cost housing when we look at the merits and demerits of planning for Oudekraal," said Boraine.

"Obviously I look carefully at any proposal to provide low-cost housing; it is the No 1 priority in the metropole. But I am dismayed that this has polarised the city into the environmental lobby versus the housing lobby."

Earlier, a very senior council official who makes decisions on these kinds of things said to me: "Why are we getting so hysterical about something that is not going to happen, it's a non-proposal."

And that is the crux of Oudekraal. It is a non-proposal, it is not going to happen, so let's stop being hysterical about it and get down to facing how we, as the people of Cape Town, are going to deal with property developers in the future.

> Wiehahn is upping the stakes for a buy-out. He owns a key piece of national heritage which he can auction off in one of the most outrageous pieces of southern African gamesmanship.

Because Wiehahn has established a new level of sleaze in the property-development business. By making a politically correct (and hopelessly unattainable) offer he has managed to elevate an inane and rapacious get-rich-quick scheme to the level of national debate.

But first the practicalities: there is no lack of money for the development of low-cost housing. Anybody who earns below a certain level (R1 500 a month) qualifies for a national housing subsidy of R15 000.

The issues obstructing the development of low-cost housing in Cape Town are, in descending order:

- Lack of available land.
- Fragmented and chaotic waiting lists.
- Administrative logjams.
- Community disputes over precedence.
- Lack of capacity to deliver.
- And, finally, finances, the last and least significant in the list.

Beyond that, council officials say, Wiehahn's proposals are nothing more than pissing into the South Easter.

He has no legal rights on the land other than rural development (putting up a farmhouse on each plot); he would have to apply for re-zoning and departures which would never be granted; he would have to subject the area to a rigorous environmental impact assessment which would never get passed; and his figures just don't add up.

He has over-estimated his income from sales and under-estimated the cost of servicing the land. Council engineers estimate it will cost about R150 000 per plot to install services and infrastructure. Wiehahn estimates half that.

The traffic tailbacks from Llandudno, Hout Bay and Noordhoek would mean a new road would have to be built (by the council), a nightmare process which, combined with the network of new access roads, would destabilise the mountain slope and leach clay into the sea, killing marine life (and maybe even squelch several busloads of Springbok Atlas tourists in rockslides).

Much of the land is part of a proclaimed national monument and a probable future world heritage site. Once Table Mountain gets world heritage site status, protocols for development are so rigorous that a streepmuis couldn't build a nest without special departures from the planning rules.

So Wiehahn is between a rock and the Atlantic Ocean. What does he do? He sets up a high-stakes poker game, waiting for the highest bidder to put up cards against his busted flush.

He is upping the stakes for a buy-out. He owns a key piece of national heritage which he can auction off in one of the most outrageous pieces of Southern African gamesmanship since noon on October 30, 1888, when agents for Cecil John Rhodes bought Bulawayo and much of Zimbabwe from King Lobengula for £100 a month, 1 000 Martini Henry rifles, 100 000 bullets and a gunboat on the Zambezi.

But he's bluffing.

Wiehahn's development plans will never, ever, be realised. And he knows it.

The figure of R2 billion is so ludicrous that we will probably never see so much as a toilet built in the townships once the concrete has covered Oudekraal — it's a time-honoured strategy, very popular on the Garden Route.

Wiehahn has cynically created a minor buzz in the townships around the promise of free housing, a fridges-from-heaven syndrome that will take some fast talking to defuse. But above all, he has set a new standard of challenge to the environmental lobby when it comes to trading off our national assets against the needs of development.

At a party last weekend I was asked (by a senior government official playing devil's advocate): "How do you justify saving a small bit of fynbos to someone who lives in a shack?"

I can't remember my answer, we had drunk too much wine by then, but if I could reply again I would dig deep into my six years of Latin and quote something Virgil taught me on the streets of Athlone: "Equo ne credite, Teucri. Quidquid id est timeo Danaos et dona ferentis."

Do not trust the horse, Trojans. Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts.

● Tony Weaver is a Cape Town-based freelance photo-journalist.

We are in control of invasives at Sandy Bay – fynbos expert

(66)

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ARG 7/10/98

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Blue crane poisoning raises resort alarm

(56) ARG 7/10/98

HEIDI CLARK
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Conservationists developing the Cape Wildlife Reserve in the Klein Karoo are concerned about the recent poisoning of three blue cranes in the area.

Conservationist John Taylor said he understood that farmers found the birds a nuisance but there were other ways of dealing with the problem.

Two cranes died and a third was treated by Swellendam veterinarian Norman Pearson for organo-phosphate poisoning.

He was uncertain what type of poison had been used but he suspected the birds had eaten insects that had been contaminated by an insecticide used to spray wheat against weevil infestation.

"When a farmer sees over 100 blue cranes descend on his newly-germinated wheat fields you can just imagine his frustration," said Dr Pearson.

"Blue cranes are insectivorous but they were often poisoned in large numbers in the past when foraging in large flocks because they would eat and trample young crops."

He said organo-phosphates were found in a large group of drugs and were used in domestic products.

"It is a difficult situation for the grain farmers because often the profit margin per hectare of wheat is only R100 or R200.

"A farmer will obviously choose the cheapest and most effective insecticide or chemical to treat his crops."

He suspected the birds had been poisoned unintentionally as most farmers understood that the blue crane was an endangered species.

In some parts of South Africa the blue crane is all but extinct, but in the Southern Cape they were often found in flocks of over 100.

The 25 000ha Cape Wildlife Reserve near Barrydale is due to open in January 2000.

The developers, Linton Projects, recently donated R25 000 to the South Western Cape raptor project at an auction marking the 25th anniversary of the Endangered Wildlife Trust.

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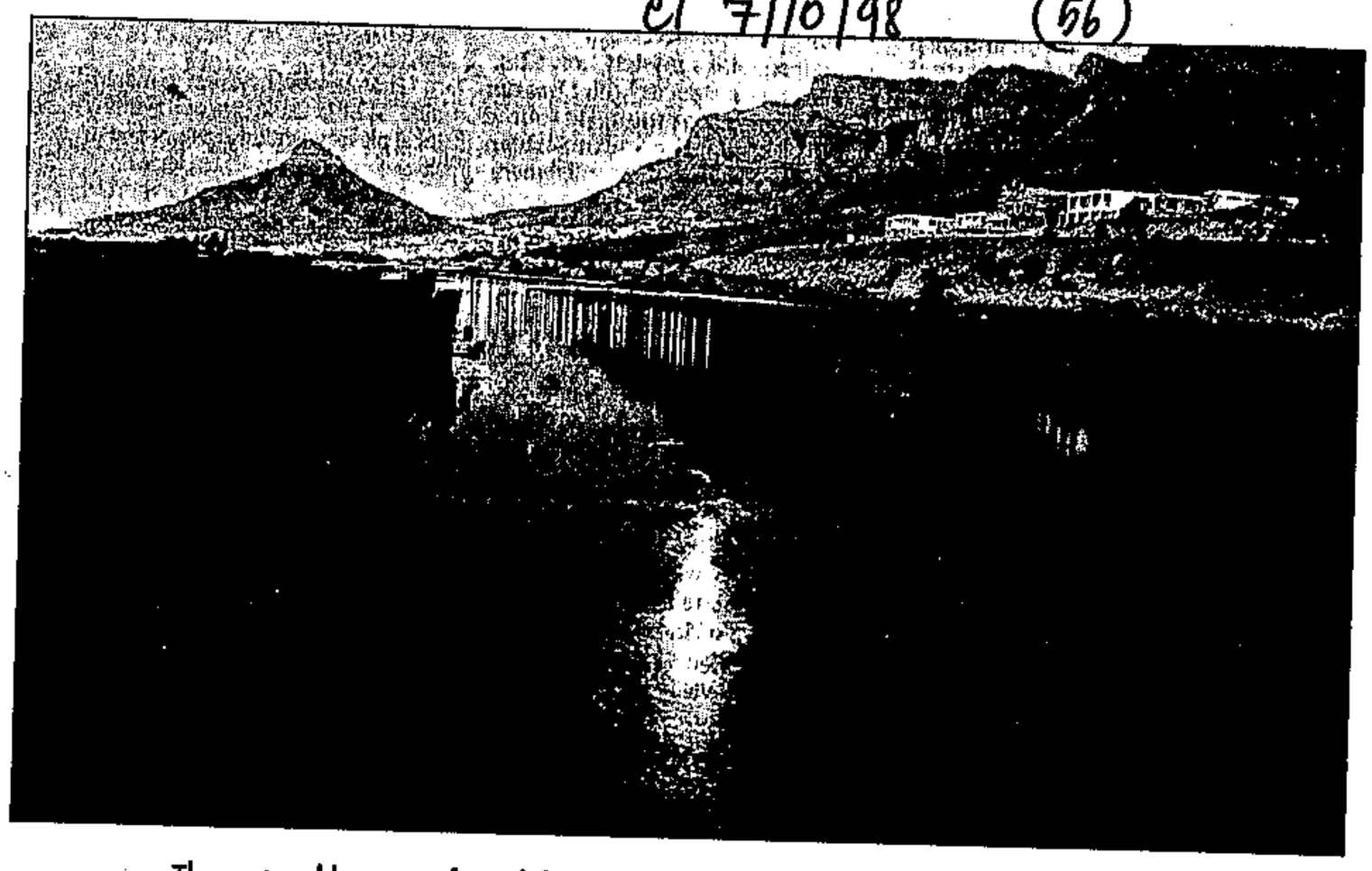

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Earlier, a very senior council official who makes decisions on these kinds of things said to me: "Why are we getting so hysterical about something that is not going to happen, it's a non-proposal."

And that is the crux of Oudekraal. It is a non-proposal, it is not going to happen, so let's stop being hysterical about it and get down to facing how we, as the people of Cape Town, are going to deal with property developers in the future.

> Wiehahn is upping the stakes for a buy-out. He owns a key piece of national heritage which he can auction off in one of the most outrageous pieces of southern African gamesmanship.

Because Wiehahn has established a new level of sleaze in the property-development business. By making a politically correct (and hopelessly unattainable) offer he has managed to elevate an inane and rapacious get-rich-quick scheme to the level of national debate.

But first the practicalities: there is no lack of money for the development of low-cost housing. Anybody who earns below a certain level (R1 500 a month) qualifies for a national housing subsidy of R15 000.

The issues obstructing the development of low-cost housing in Cape Town are, in descending order:

- Lack of available land.
- Fragmented and chaotic waiting lists.
- Administrative logjams.
- Community disputes over precedence.
- Lack of capacity to deliver.
- And, finally, finances, the last and least significant in the list.

Beyond that, council officials say, Wiehahn's proposals are nothing more than pissing into the South Easter.

He has no legal rights on the land other than rural development (putting up a farmhouse on each plot); he would have to apply for re-zoning and departures which would never be granted; he would have to subject the area to a rigorous environmental impact assessment which would never get passed; and his figures just don't add up.

He has over-estimated his income from sales and under-estimated the cost of servicing the land. Council engineers estimate it will cost about R150 000 per plot to install services and infrastructure. Wiehahn estimates half that.

The traffic tailbacks from Llandudno, Hout Bay and Noordhoek would mean a new road would have to be built (by the council), a nightmare process which, combined with the network of new access roads, would destabilise the mountain slope and leach clay into the sea, killing marine life (and maybe even squelch several busloads of Springbok Atlas tourists in rockslides).

Much of the land is part of a proclaimed national monument and a probable future world heritage site. Once Table Mountain gets world heritage site status, protocols for development are so rigorous that a streepmuis couldn't build a nest without special departures from the planning rules.

So Wiehahn is between a rock and the Atlantic Ocean. What does he do? He sets up a high-stakes poker game, waiting for the highest bidder to put up cards against his busted flush.

He is upping the stakes for a buy-out. He owns a key piece of national heritage which he can auction off in one of the most outrageous pieces of Southern African gamesmanship since noon on October 30, 1888, when agents for Cecil John Rhodes bought Bulawayo and much of Zimbabwe from King Lobengula for £100 a month, 1 000 Martini Henry rifles, 100 000 bullets and a gunboat on the Zambezi.

But he's bluffing.

Wiehahn's development plans will never, ever, be realised. And he knows it.

The figure of R2 billion is so ludicrous that we will probably never see so much as a toilet built in the townships once the concrete has covered Oudekraal — it's a time-honoured strategy, very popular on the Garden Route.

Wiehahn has cynically created a minor buzz in the townships around the promise of free housing, a fridges-from-heaven syndrome that will take some fast talking to defuse. But above all, he has set a new standard of challenge to the environmental lobby when it comes to trading off our national assets against the needs of development.

At a party last weekend I was asked (by a senior government official playing devil's advocate): "How do you justify saving a small bit of fynbos to someone who lives in a shack?"

I can't remember my answer, we had drunk too much wine by then, but if I could reply again I would dig deep into my six years of Latin and quote something Virgil taught me on the streets of Athlone: "Equo ne credite, Teucri. Quidquid id est timeo Danaos et dona ferentis."

Do not trust the horse, Trojans. Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts.

● Tony Weaver is a Cape Town-based freelance photo-journalist.

Politicos to make statement on land row today

ENVIRONMENT WRITER

AN ANC delegation met Oudekraal owner Kassie Wiehahn to discuss his controversial development plan yesterday afternoon — but last night were tight-lipped about what they thought of it.

ANC spokesperson Cameron Dugmore said last night the delegation had decided not to say anything about the meeting until today when they would release a statement.

"We had a preparatory meeting yesterday morning with about 30 people before we met Wiehahn. We needed to hear the details of Wiehahn's proposal and to interrogate it, to make sure we have the full information so that the ANC can come to a view on the matter.

"Once we heard that we would be able to say what sort of processes need to take place. More than that I can't say tonight," Dugmore said.

Wiehahn and his son, Theo, armed with rolls of plans and documents, met the delegation at the Provincial offices in Wale Street at 2pm. The meeting lasted for several hours.

The ANC delegation consisted of ANC Western Cape leader Ebrahim Rasool; Garth Strachan, planning spokesperson; Russel McGregor, spokesperson on the environment; Leonard Ramatlakane, spokesperson on transport; Rose Sonto, spokesperson on housing; Sue van der Merwe, parliamentary portfolio committee on the environment; and Hassiem Salie, a financial consultant.

Wiehahn has offered to pay R2 billion for low-cost housing if he is allowed to develop 1 000 luxury housing units at Oudekraal.

He has lodged no formal rezoning or subdivision application for Oudekraal with the City Council yet.

The council says any plans he submits will be subject to a stringent environmental impact assessments.

OUDEKRAAL the house the question

LET'S TALK: Oudekraal owner Kassie Wiehahn (centre) brought his son Theo (left) to the talks with the ANC delegation, headed by Ebrahim Rasool (right). *PICTURE: GARTH STEAD*

'Expropriate Oudekraal'

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

CT 8/10/98

OUDEKRAAL should be expropriated, says David Daitz, co-ordinator of the Cape Peninsula National Park.

He believes that for as long as the 440ha stretch of land on the slopes of Table Mountain is in private hands, it is at serious risk of being developed.

"If the people of Cape Town are saying they don't want even one house built there, that they want it conserved, then it should be expropriated, and it should be done now," he said.

> *"For Oudekraal to remain undeveloped ... expropriation is the only way to do it."*

"The state, the province and the city all have powers to expropriate if they can show that it is in the public interest for them to do so.

"SA National Parks could also do it, but we would only do it if the government was prepared to meet the costs, which will run into millions.

"I believe the longer Oudekraal is left in private hands, the greater the risk that we will lose for ever the chance of getting the land under conservation."

SA National Parks has identified Oudekraal as one of the pieces of land in private ownership that it would like to include in the Peninsula park.

They say it is the only piece of Table Mountain that is undeveloped from its summit right down to the sea.

While Cape Town City Council has ruled that Oudekraal owner Kassie Wiehahn has no development rights — and that he would have to lodge fresh applications to rezone and subdivide the land — Daitz believes there is no certainty that in 20 years' time, with different authorities in place, that Oudekraal would not be developed.

"But if it is expropriated now, we can remove that risk," Daitz said.

"If it is expropriated, Oudekraal will be independently valued.

"At present the land is zoned rural, and under rural zonation, Wiehahn is entitled to build a house on each of the five portions of land.

"But that would be all.

"On that basis, the land would be valued at, let's say, R50 million. But you can be sure Wiehahn will contest the expropriation in court, and the only grounds he could advance are that he does have development rights, and that therefore his land is worth much more.

"That will force him to go to court to prove he has development rights.

"If he wins that action, then the court can either set aside the expropriation, or can set a higher value he must be paid in compensation," Daitz said.

If Wiehahn were to lose, the expropriation would go ahead and the land could be incorporated into the Cape Peninsula National Park.

It would be given "schedule one" conservation status, the same as that accorded to Kruger National Park.

This means that only an act of Parliament, with a two-thirds majority, could deproclaim the land.

"There are financial costs involved in expropriation and the ensuing legal action, which would run into millions.

"But there are also all sorts of innovative ways the money can be raised.

"If the people of Cape Town really want Oudekraal to remain undeveloped, I believe expropriation is the only way to do it," Daitz said.

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Cape ANC rejects plan to develop Table Mountain site

(56)

Linda Ensor

BD 9/10/98

CAPE TOWN — A delegation of Western Cape leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) rejected proposals yesterday to develop the Oudekraal site on the slope of Table Mountain near Camps Bay.

After meeting the property owner, Kassie Wiehahn, yesterday, the delegation concluded that there was no substance to his R2bn offer for low-cost housing in exchange for the right to develop the land for single residential, multi residential and commercial purposes.

The ANC said the R2bn would only become available if 1 000 erven on the Oudekraal site were sold to selected super-rich international and local buyers.

"We do not believe that this is the most appropriate use of this land, nor do we believe that this is an appropriate way to raise funds for low-cost housing," ANC spokesman Cameron Dugmore said.

"We further believe that any proposal for the development of this site should follow the due process as required by the law, including a broad consultation with the public."

Dugmore said the ANC would seek a meeting with Environmental Minister Pallo Jordan to report on the outcome of its consultations with stakeholders.

City lays down law to Oudekraal developer

ANC says 'No' to Wiehahn's plan

ARG 9/10/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The City of Cape Town has confirmed that Oudekraal owner Kasper Wiehahn does not have township development rights on any of his property, and that he will have to submit development proposals from scratch.

In another development, the African National Congress has given Mr Wiehahn's controversial Oudekraal proposals a categorical "No", saying that his R2-billion offer for low-cost housing "does not exist". This follows a meeting on Tuesday between Mr Wiehahn and an ANC delegation led by Western Cape leader Ebrahim Rasool.

Cape Town executive committee chairman Saleem Mowzer said the council had formally replied to Mr Wiehahn on his development proposals, which included the R2-billion "offer", telling him:

- His assumption of existing development rights was incorrect.
- His financial projections appeared to be "over-stated".
- Any development proposal regarding the Oudekraal property had be lodged anew.
- Any proposal lodged would be subjected to a full environmental impact assessment.

Mr Mowzer said: "Council welcomes the intense public debate about Oudekraal and sees it as an indication of a real concern for environmental protection, on one hand, and the need to address the serious problems of poverty and housing, on the other."

The ANC said Mr Wiehahn's proposal to support low-cost housing projects in other areas would accrue only as a result of the sale of 1 000 erven on the Oudekraal site.

CAPE TIMES
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1998

'HOUSING OFFER DOES NOT EXIST'

ANC blows Wiehahn's 'offer' out of the water

CT 9/10/98 (56)

KASSIE WIEHAHN'S Oudekraal proposal has been forcefully rejected by the ANC. He says that now it's time for "trade-offs". Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THE ANC has blown Kassie Wiehahn's Oudekraal proposal out of the water by issuing a statement yesterday saying his R2 billion offer for low-cost housing "does not exist".

The party also said Oudekraal should not be turned into a high-density, luxury development site, nor does it believe trade-off deals like this are the way to fund low-cost housing.

"The ANC will meet Mr Wiehahn to persuade him to recognise the potential of this unique piece of South Africa's heritage and its benefit to all South Africans," the statement said.

After meeting Wiehahn on Wednesday to consider his proposal, the ANC said the deal could only happen if Wiehahn could sell some 1 000 erven at Oudekraal.

"Wiehahn's proposal is that these erven would be sold to selected super-rich international and local buyers ... We do not believe this is the most appropriate use of the land, nor do we believe this is an appropriate way to raise funds for low-cost housing.

"We have satisfied ourselves that the R2bn offer for low cost housing does not exist."

Many people saw Wiehahn's proposal to "donate" R2bn to build 100 000 houses in the province's disadvantaged areas in exchange for Oudekraal development rights as a political ploy. The city council had already turned down his development application for Oudekraal two years ago.

Wiehahn's offer amounts to a quarter of the country's low-cost housing budget, and would provide half the Western Cape's housing needs for the poor.

Because of this size of the offer, many felt Wiehahn had painted politicians into a corner, particularly the ANC, whose main constituency is the poor.

Now that the ANC has shot holes in his proposal, it is effectively a dead duck.

The city council had said earlier that the authorities could not legally do deals with the public when they considered an application to develop. Legal opinion is that if they were to do so, any decisions they came to were likely to be set aside by a court on review.

The ANC has backed this, and said yesterday any proposal for development at Oudekraal must "follow the due process as required by law".

They said this should be accompanied by broad public consultation and studies to examine environmental, religious and other factors on which development of the site may have an impact.

The ANC would consult all "stakeholders", including Environment Minister Pallo Jordan, before arranging a follow-up meeting with Wiehahn to persuade him to "recognise the potential of Oudekraal and its benefits to all South Africans".

Wiehahn did not seem deterred by the ANC's statement, and told the *Cape Times* yesterday that he thought it was a "very interesting document".

"This might be where trade-offs begin," he said.

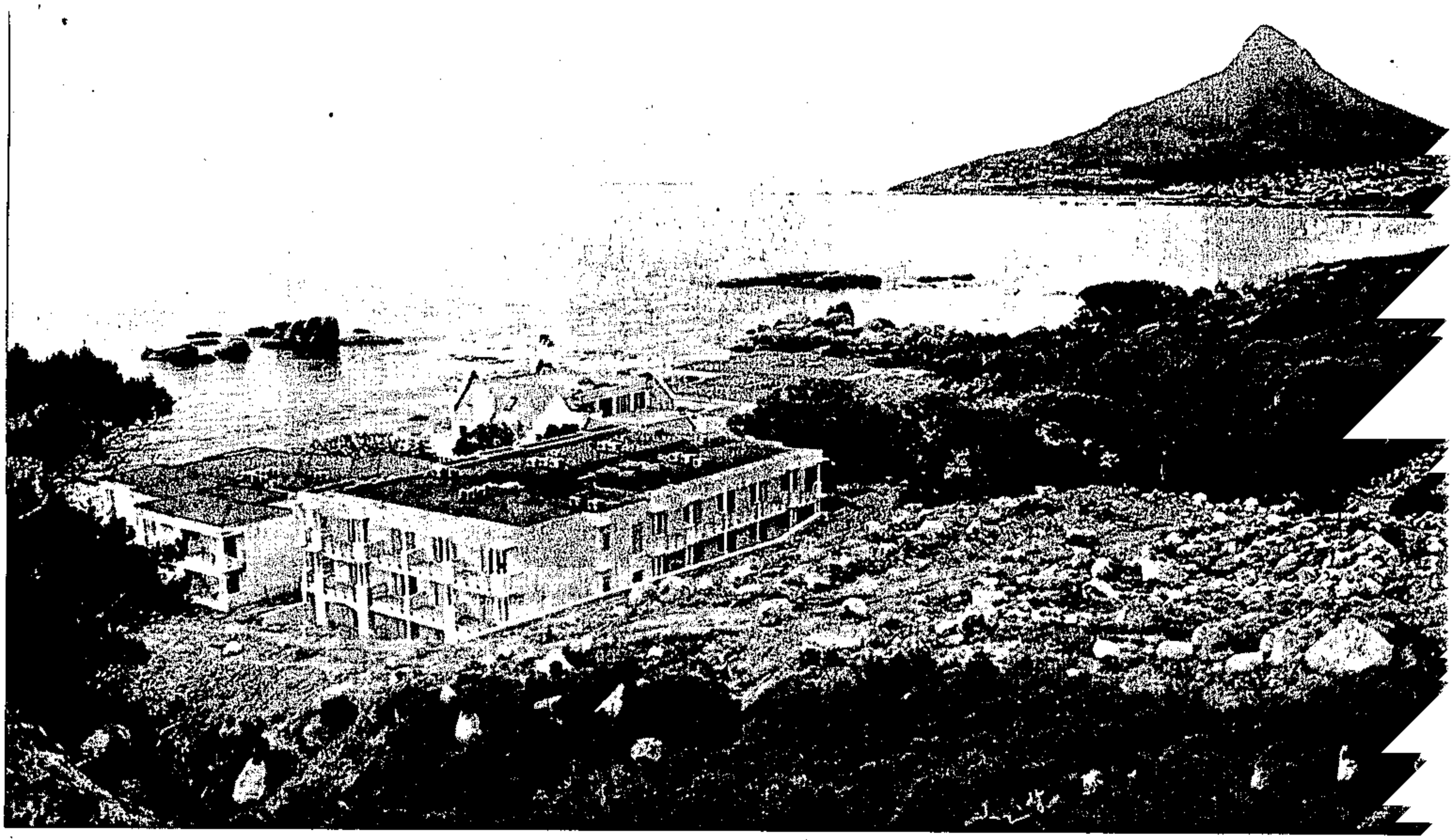
Asked what he thought of their claim that his R2bn offer did not exist, Wiehahn replied: "The way I read it is that they're saying I have no development rights on portions 6,5,4 and 3, and therefore if I can't build houses there, I can't raise the money."

Wiehahn still maintains he has development rights, but says he cannot say yet if he will go to court to prove it.

Wiehahn insists that he will press ahead with his proposal. "I'm seeing Kobus Meiring (MEC for the Environment) on Monday and there are some other meetings which people have asked me to keep confidential."

Would he take legal action if the authorities expropriated Oudekraal to include it in the Cape Peninsula National Park?

"Look, expropriation is a method of purchase under pressure, and whether I accept it depends on what they offer. If the trade-off is good, it won't be a problem."



World-famous scenery: the unrivalled stretch of coastline from Oudekraal to Bakoven. Visitors from all over South Africa and the rest of the world come to the Cape to see the views,

Wiehahn's Oudekraal: g

INSIDE STORY

Contributing Editor **LINDA VERGNANI** interviews the controversial owner of Oudekraal and asks, isn't it time once and for all to resolve this long-running development dispute?

Most tourists have seen the familiar picture of Table Mountain taken from Blouberg with exuberant yellow daisies spilling over dunes in the foreground.

The problem is that that pristine foreground no longer exists. The dunes have largely been flattened and replaced by townhouses, shopping centres and roads. Where daisy plants once sprawled, there are now tarmac parking lots and boardwalks.

In an effort to stop sand drift, the remains of the dunes have been "rehabilitated" – planted with dune grass and watered by conspicuous sprinklers.

Another of the world's great views is the first glimpse of the Twelve Apostles soaring up beyond the tranquil turquoise waters of Clifton bay.

The only place to see it, before it is obscured by wall-to-wall blocks of flats, is from a small undeveloped section of Victoria Road between Bantry Bay and Clifton. Yet in the past few weeks, this view has been ruined by coils of razor wire that loop over the rocks and along the retaining wall.

Councillor Chris Joubert claims responsibility for the fence saying it was put up at the request of Clifton residents because "dangerous criminals" had settled with vagrants in the caves below.

Mr Joubert said: "I'm willing to sacrifice certain scenic drives if it will prevent crimes." But it has certainly not kept out the squatters, who can still be seen making cooking fires amidst the giant boulders.

Higher up the slopes between Bantry Bay and Camps Bay, the ever-larger status mansions of the super-rich jockey for position on enormous concrete pillars. Colossal structures, like stylish blocks of flats, now dominate the view from the lower sections of the pipe track around Lion's Head.

These are just some examples of the insidious development that has been allowed by complacent Capetonians. So perhaps it is a good thing that Kasper Wiehahn has openly offered what is effectively a R2-billion bribe to the city to allow him maximum development rights to the unrivalled stretch of coastline from Bakoven to beyond Oudekraal.

Most of the 4km stretch of land he inherited is zoned for rural development – which means, at most, he can put up a few houses and outbuildings.

The council ruled in 1996 that the subdivision of portion seven of the land, which was approved for housing development some 30 years earlier, had lapsed. So the council maintains Mr Wiehahn has no township development rights.

In terms of the Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework, an overall plan to guide development of greater Cape Town into the 21st century, the Oudekraal land is designated as metropolitan open space. While any existing development rights would be honoured in such areas, zoning rights cannot be upgraded.

Two years ago, Mr Wiehahn spoke of donating land to the Table Mountain reserve (the future Cape Peninsula National Park) in exchange for developing section seven. That plan is no longer on the table.

Instead Mr Wiehahn has attacked the soft underbelly of the city, and made what to some appears to be a philanthropic offer to fund 100 000 houses for the poor. In the run-up to the elections, the canny Mr Wiehahn realises that political sensitivities are such that he will not be turned down out of hand.

In an interview, Mr Wiehahn confirmed his latest plan involves building a solid belt of houses, flats, shops and even corporate headquarters along the coast to beyond the White House Hotel. "We're not talking high rise. It's not Adderley street."

He claims the exact development will depend on a future environmental study. The buildings will go up to the 500m contour, above which he says the land is too steep to develop.

The highest area might form some kind of reserve, either private or public. Asked how he could justify developing one of Cape Town's most spectacular environmental areas, Mr Wiehahn responded: "This land is not so vast. If you see what we are doing for the environment from Rondebosch East to Somerset West (where 100 000 houses will be built) that will do a lot of good."

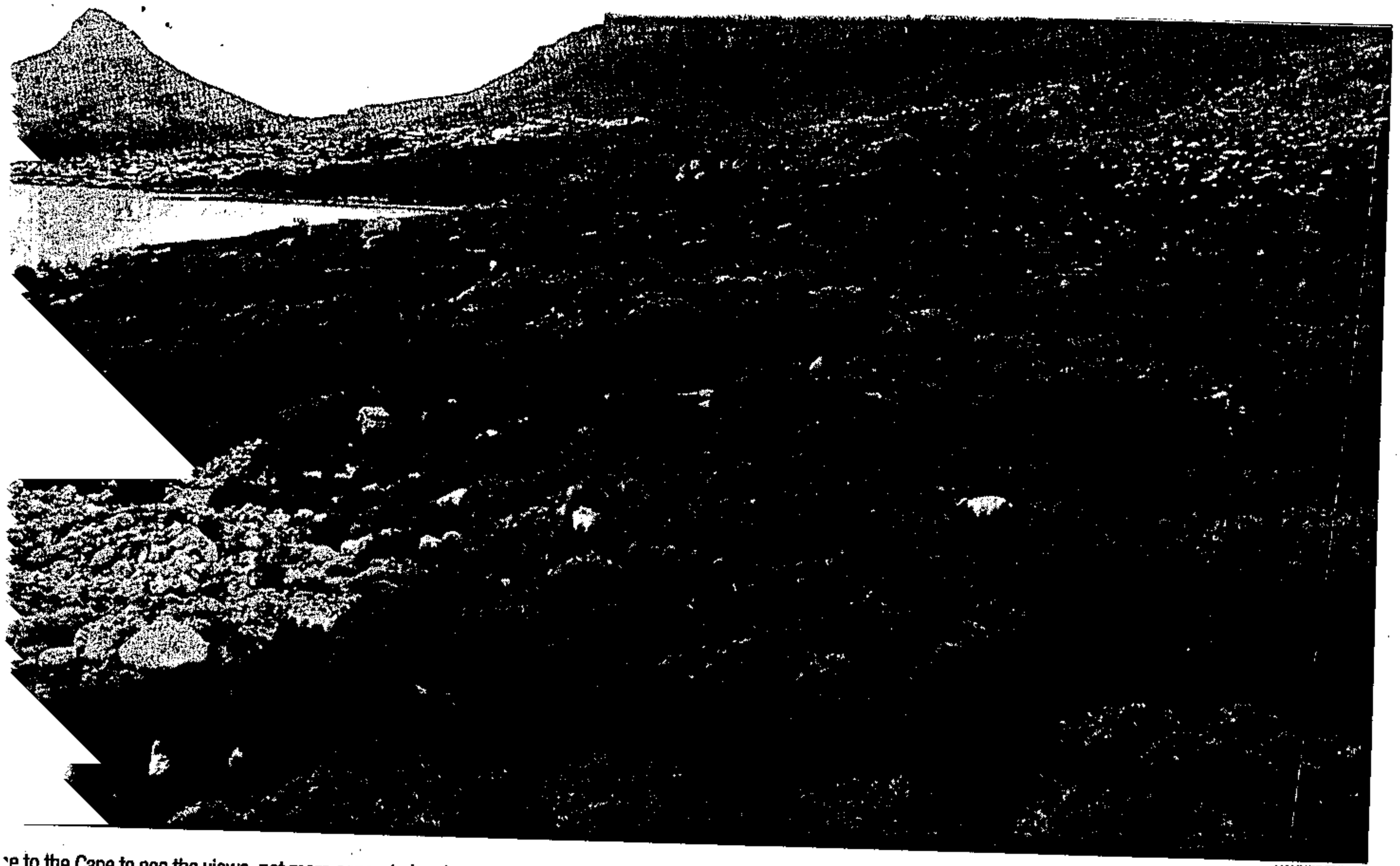
He said the development of Oudekraal should be weighed against the impact of his proposed low-cost housing scheme on unemployment, housing and crime.

City manager Andrew Boraine reportedly said while the council approved in principle of the concept of developers helping to pay for housing in disadvantaged areas, this could not be linked to planning approval.

He said Mr Wiehahn would have to make a new application for subdivision of portion seven if he wished to develop it.

However, Mr Wiehahn insists he has development rights to portion seven. "I disagree that is necessary to go to court."

Mr Joubert describes Mr Wiehahn's proposals as "pie in the sky. Let him go to court and prove



'e to the Cape to see the views, not more concrete jungles, say environmentalists opposed to the proposed development at Oudekraal

HANNES THIART

al: greed or altruism?

(56) ARG 9/10/98

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that he has development rights. Then he can put forward plans and we can sit down and at the table and see what compromise can be reached."

But can Cape Town afford such a compromise? Environmental groups are justifiably outraged at Mr Wiehahn's latest development plans.

If the Oudekraal land is rezoned for development, the slopes which are dotted with rare krepelhout trees, will disappear under massive mansions. Camps Bay is the gateway to one of the country's biggest tourist drawcards – the Atlantic scenic route to Cape Point.

Tourists and commuters will be caught in daily traffic jams on the road from Hout Bay to Cape Town. New roads will scar the fragile and unstable clay slopes and sewerage or storm water drainage could pollute the rich marine reserve at Oudekraal. The Muslim shrines will be encircled by buildings. Problems of crime will be dealt with by razor wire and electric fencing – possibly restricting access to the mountain or the sea.

And so one of Cape Town's most spectacular scenic attractions – the great tumble of relatively unspoiled mountain slope into the kelp-lined shore will disappear under ubiquitous concrete. Mr Wiehahn will have cut what he described as his ripe cheese, but all that will be left for future generations could be the environmental stink.

Merle Sowman, research associate in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences at the University of Cape Town, describes Mr Wiehahn's proposals as "outrageous" and against all the environmental guidelines for sensitive areas.

He is asking for "significantly enhanced development rights" for a once off payment of R2-billion. Dr Sowman says this should be weighed against the enormous environmental, scenic, cultural and tourist value of the land.

> ***'Tourists come for the natural qualities of the landscape, not to see urban development'***

According to a new Coastal Policy Green Paper the estimated value of tourism in coastal environments is around R13 500-million annually.

Dr Sowman says: "Tourists come for the incredibly beautiful, natural qualities of the landscape, not to see urban development."

She suggests that as a general principle, landowners who have zoning rights upgraded to allow denser development should be required to put something back into the community. All over Cape Town, zoning restrictions are being overturned as property developers have their land zoning upgraded.

Dr Sowman says the cumulative effect of the denser development is to put far greater strain on roads, services, infrastructure and the natural environment. She suggests developers should be compelled to pay for this rezoning by contributing to a development fund.

Desre Buirski, director of the Save Table Mountain Campaign, maintains that Mr Wiehahn's greed is "insatiable" and the only place to stop him is in the courts. She says he must take his application for rezoning to court for a final ruling.

"I don't believe Mr Wiehahn is for real. We haven't seen the business plan or proposals on how he will get the houses erected and give the R2-billion.

"We might have lost the battle against the White House, but we will not lose the war against the development of Oudekraal," she said. "It's not just the environment we are talking about but an incredibly sensitive religious and cultural heritage.

■ *Linda Vergnani, is a freelance journalist and South African correspondent for The Chronicle of Higher Education. She is a former head of communications of the Independent Development Trust and a former reporter for the Cape Argus and Sunday Tribune.*

Struisbaai fishermen accuse Kalk Bay rivals of 'strip-mining'

ARG 10/10/98

PIETER MALAN

A fishing war is brewing as subsistence fishermen in Struisbaai accuse pelagic fishermen from Kalk Bay of poaching the area's valuable line fish and taking the "bread" out of their mouths.

Struisbaai fishermen say they are at their wits' end after the promise of good yellowtail catches vanished for the second year running.

They believe that the fish were caught by Kalk Bay fishermen illegally trawling the yellowtail reefs with nets at night.

The pelagic fishermen have quotas for pilchard and are not allowed to catch yellowtail, which are designated "line fish", with nets.

Freddie Afrika, the chairman of the local Fisherman's Co-operative Struisbaai, says fishermen saw a lot of yellowtail this month and were preparing for a good season.

"Yellowtail loves playing on the surface. Especially early in the morning it looks like rain (falling on the water) when they come up."

But the fish disappeared suddenly, without one being caught by the local fisherman.

Mr Afrika said the Struisbaai fishermen believed their fish had been taken by trawlers at night.

"It's so cruel what these guys are doing to us," he said, adding that about 300 families in Struisbaai depended on the sea for survival.

Andy Johnson, the chairman of the SA Informal Fishing Co-operative, said the organisation was investigating charges of "strip-mining". "We believe these guys catch the yellowtail with nets and then put hooks through the fishes' mouths to convince inspectors that the fish were line-caught."

the sea

Koeberg to double radioactive store

ARG 10/10/98 (56)

SHARKEY ISAACS

In a controversial move the Council on Nuclear Safety has announced plans to double the storage facilities for highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel at the Koeberg nuclear power station.

This means that more than 1 500 highly radioactive spent fuel rods will be stored at the power station.

Phil Metcalf, deputy general-manager of the Council on Nuclear Safety, announced the controversial plans to store the spent radioactive fuel at Koeberg power station during a public hearing held in Cape Town yesterday.

Mr Metcalf said there was a need to store spent fuel element rods on site to ensure the fuel lost some radioactivity before attempts were made to chemically recycle the rods.

He said existing storage rack facilities only had sufficient capacity to store 720 spent nuclear fuel element rods and this capacity would be used up by the year 2000.

The need to add more facilities had now become imperative. The extra storage rack space would extend the total storage capacity to 1 538 spent radioactive fuel rods.

The council had approved the step because the spent fuel was stored behind safety barriers in racks submerged in water.

Role-players will visit Koeberg next week to access the situation for themselves.

A national trust will stop our gardens from going to seed

It is high time that we acted to preserve the best of our green heritage now in private ownership, says KEITH KIRSTEN

ST 11/10/98 (56)

ZIMBABWE has one, so have Japan, Malaysia and Australia. Even Barbados, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands — countries whose combined GDP does not match South Africa's — have one.

All have a national trust, set up to preserve their heritage where the government is unable or unwilling to do so.

The guiding principle behind a national trust is that a society which forgets and neglects its past would be, like a man with amnesia, lost indeed.

With the SA government understandably preoccupied with the reconstruction of society, it is up to the private sector — corporate, institutional and individuals — to make sure that future generations will inherit the best of the past. As much as good schools, health care or public transport, they'll judge us by what we leave behind.

We in this country are blessed with an incredible cultural, historical and natural heritage. Most citizens are aware of our great natural assets — the Drakensberg, Table Mountain and the Kruger National Park — but we also boast a world-class array of man-made creations, like the Union Buildings and Kirstenbosch.

Lesser known are a host of private homes and gardens, securely owned and maintained now, but with no watertight guarantee of survival.

The famous include Vergelegen in the Cape and Westminster Estate in the Free State.

While South Africa has a number of organisations (like the National Parks Board and the Worldwide Fund for Nature) that act as custodians of our natural heritage, we do not have a comparable body doing the same for those parts of our heritage which are man-made — particularly gardens.

The National Botanical Institute does incredible work with the eight botanical gardens in its care, and a few municipal parks departments do very good work in their own areas. But other man-made creations live on in a precarious vacuum.

A number of notable South Africans like Dr Anton Rupert have acted to preserve buildings, and there are several organisations in the field.

Through the National Monuments Council, the government also provides legislative protection to man-made monuments.

But their responsibility is limited to guiding the owners of such monuments in their upkeep. They don't have — nor are they likely to have — funds for the ongoing maintenance and restoration of these national assets.

A neglected building can become irreparably run-down, and gardens of international excellence are an even rarer and more fragile commodity, which, once lost, can't be recreated.

South Africa has a poor record of protecting its man-made assets, and we have all witnessed the destruction of green areas in the interests of development.

At present, new democratic councils are being forced to sell off existing parks to create funds for other more pressing priorities, and it is a great irony that, for a country blessed with space and good weather, we have so few outdoor recreation areas.

The most successful and famous trust of all, the National Trust in Britain, formed 100 years ago by three concerned citizens who wanted to protect that country's aesthetic and cultural history, has become its largest private landowner.

It employs thousands of people and generates hundreds of millions of pounds a year.

Every year, tens of thousands of volunteers man the various National Trust properties, and there is a tremendous sense of "ownership" among its 1,5 million members. Despite owning palaces, castles and cottages, the trust's biggest money-spinner is a garden, that of the Bloomsbury poet Vita Sackville-West at Sissinghurst in Kent.

Arguably, the National Trust generates the greatest number of tourists to Britain annually, and the benefits for associated tourist industries are incalculable. All this from a non-profit organisation independent of the government.

South Africa desperately needs a national trust to actively manage its own cultural and aesthetic history. It has at least 100 notable gardens worthy of preservation and comparable with the best in the world, including St Margaret's and Brenthurst in Johannesburg, Una van der Spuy's Old Nectar in Stellenbosch, Fern Valley botanical garden in KwaZulu-Natal, Sheila Thompson's cherry and azalea gardens at Goedvertrouen in Northern Province and other private gardens, big and small, rural and urban.

Many of these will simply disappear or become neglected beyond restoration once their owners die or move on.

Beautiful gardens can easily be turned into tourist attractions, and many towns and municipalities which have "nothing to offer" could become tourist destinations.

Who had heard of Nieu-Bethesda in the Karoo before Helen Martins and her fantastical sculpture garden made it famous?

We have one of the richest floras in the world, and some gardens offer an opportunity for visitors to explore this flora in an accessible manner. They also offer an opportunity to reconnect with the natural world without having to travel great distances and incur great cost.

For those concerned about our quality of life and that of our children, now is the time to do something constructive.

● *Keith Kirsten is a leading horticulturist*

Bold plan to solve Oudekraal poser

ARG 12/10/98 (76)(1044)

LENORE OLIVER
STAFF REPORTER

A former top Cape Metropolitan Council official has come up with bold suggestion to resolve the impasse over the development of Oudekraal.

Neil van der Spuy, who retired as the council's director of legal services in January and is now chairman of the Llandudno Ratepayers' Association, suggests that Victoria Drive be extended across portion 7 of Kasper Wiehahn's land, that closest to Camps Bay, which will allow him to develop almost a kilometre of seafront.

Mr Wiehahn has offered to give the city R2-billion towards low-cost housing in exchange for permission to develop a 4km strip of coastal land between Camps Bay and Llandudno.

He has said that if the Cape Town City Council allowed him to put up high-density luxury housing on the full length of his Oudekraal property, he would pay for 100 000 houses wherever authorities said they were needed most.

There has been a public outcry about building on the pristine coastal land and about the concept of trading development rights.

Mr Van der Spuy has suggested that Victoria Drive be deviated from the coast across portion 7, rising gradually and connecting with Fulham Road in Camps Bay. Portion 7 was zoned for single residential development in the 1950s although the Cape Town city council says these rights have lapsed.

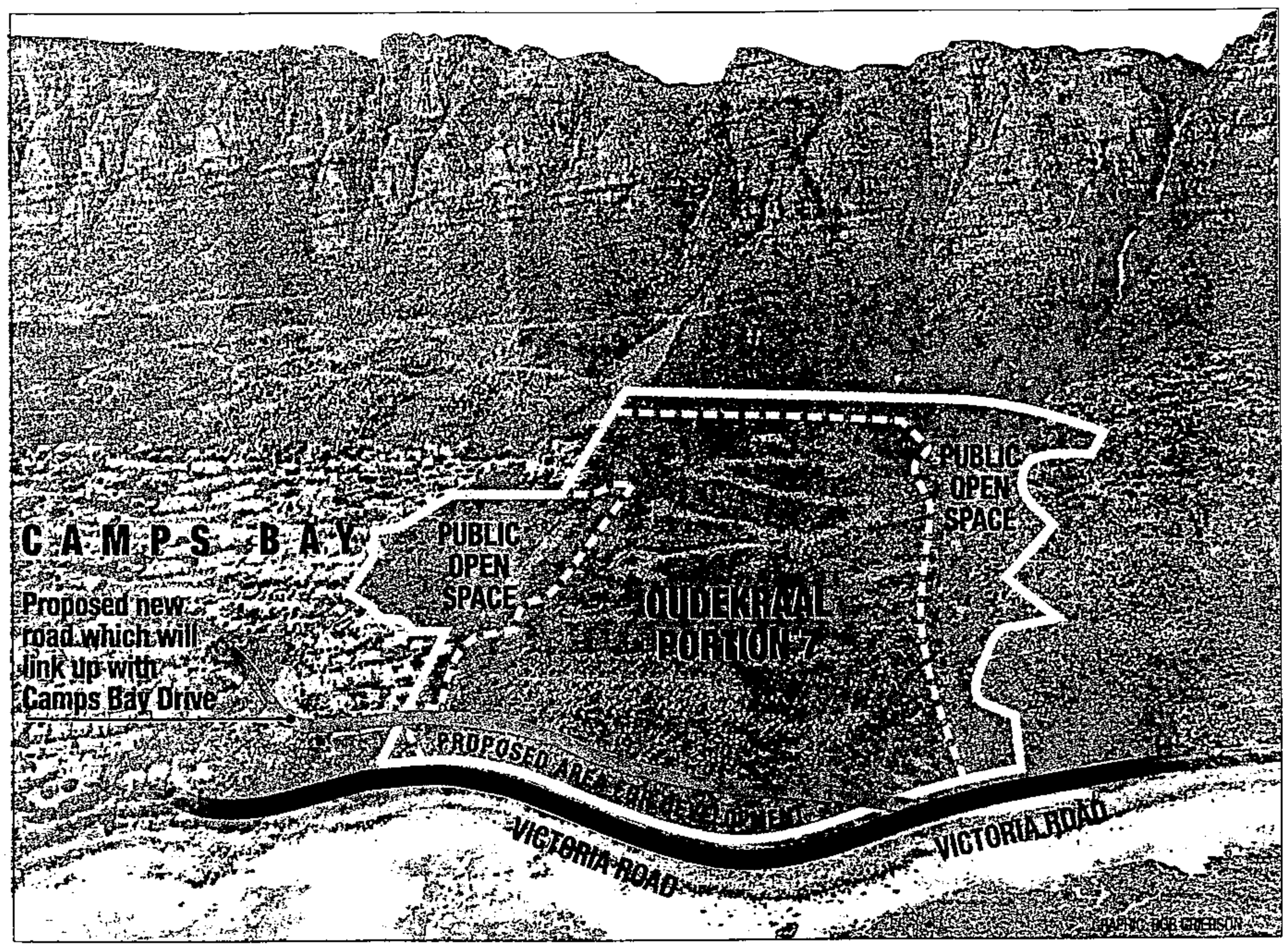
Mr Van der Spuy said this would create a triangle of land between the new road across portion 7 and Victoria Road along the coast that could be developed.

"This triangle will have a sea frontage of about three-quarters of a kilometre," Mr Van der Spuy said.

He suggested that the council allow Mr Wiehahn maximum development within this triangle but with a height restriction not to exceed the level of the new road.

"One envisages a full range of zonings to provide for apartments, restaurants, shops, hotels and even perhaps a marine development on the sea side of the old road. "As is customary, Mr Wiehahn should be required to contribute to the cost of the new road."

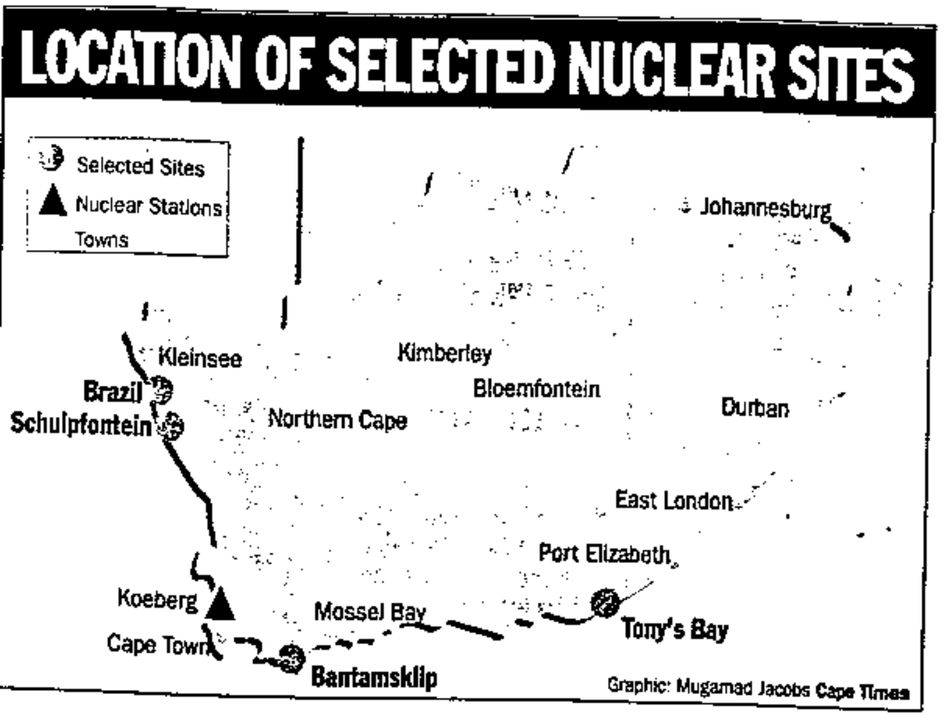
In return for these enhanced development rights, which probably more than equated with the value of his property, Mr Wiehahn should cede the balance of the land free to the National Parks Board, said Mr Van der Spuy.



GRAPHIC: BOB GRIERSON

Cry of 'No nukes!' greets Eskom plan

ET 13/10/98 (56)



ANKS, BUT NO THANKS: Residents from Kommagas in Namaqualand, who met t week to hear Eskom's proposal to buy land near their town for a "potential clear site", say they don't want one there. PICTURE: WAYNE CONRADIE

WHILE most countries are scaling down nuclear power generation, Eskom is looking at expanding nuclear power in the future. But there is strong opposition to new atomic plants. Environment Writer ***MELANIE GOSLING*** *reports.*

ESKOM is negotiating in the face of strong public opposition to buy up land on the West Coast as a "potential" nuclear power station site that would be capable of carrying three power stations the size of Koeberg.

The land in question consists of two farms on the Namaqualand coast south of Kleinsee, one of which is owned by De Beers and the other by the government.

If Eskom is successful, it would own four coastal sites that it has earmarked as "potential nuclear sites":

- Bantamsklip between Gansbaai and Cape Agulhas, which Eskom bought in the 1980s.
- Tony's Bay near Cape St Francis, where Eskom has already bought most of the land it needs for a nuclear site and is negotiating to include the final sections it wants in the site.
- Duinefontein north of Cape Town, site of the Koeberg nuclear power station and the place most likely to be used to build the first of Eskom's proposed "pocket nukes" if the project is given the go-ahead by the authorities.

Communities in Namaqualand and the Eastern Cape are strongly opposed to having nuclear power stations in their areas, and have recently held meetings with Eskom and local authorities to voice their objections.

Eskom says the public is overreacting because it is buying the land only to "keep options open" for future energy supplies, one of which may be expansion of nuclear power generation.

Eskom says that if it does decide to go the way of more nuclear power, it will be many years before any power stations are built, and it will have to get the nod from the government first. It would also do environmental impact assessments that would involve the public.

But these promises haven't placated the people living near the sites earmarked for future nuclear plants.

The people of Kommagas in Namaqualand, the town nearest to the two farms Eskom wants to buy on the West Coast, met Eskom officials last week to "establish the facts" about the possibility of a nuclear power station being built on their doorstep.

Spokesperson for the community Andy Pienaars said: "Eskom says it won't be a big power station, just a small pebble bed modular reactor, but we say we don't want any, big or small.

"It's unfair for us to have one near us, with all the safety risks, when we have such a low population here, and the power will be used by people far away who don't have to share the risks.

"Eskom says if it builds a nuclear power station it will provide work opportunities and infrastructure for us, but we don't want to sell off our future for jobs and infrastructure."

Bokka du Toit, spokesperson for the Kouga Nuclear Concern Group at Jeffreys Bay, said the group had called on the local authority not to approve the new structure plan, paid for by Eskom, which identifies Tony's Bay as a site suitable for the production of nuclear energy.

Du Toit said Eskom officials had met the community about a year ago to tell it that Tony's Bay was a potential nuclear power station site.

"Then they presented it as a sort of 'never-never', as a remote possibility. This year we have a new structure plan for the region which says it is imperative to maintain that area for a nuclear power station," Du Toit said.

"The community forum picked this up and we held public meetings to tell the people about it. Who says we need nuclear energy anyway? This area is on the cards to become a biosphere reserve and we've polled international tourists in Jeffreys Bay who say if a nuclear power station is built here they'd rather not come here."

Du Toit said Eskom told the community that its fears were unwarranted because there was no certainty that it would build a nuclear power station near Cape St Francis, and if it did, it would be years in the future after an extensive environmental impact assessment.

"Then we read a different story in an engineering magazine where Eskom says it will have these pebble bed modular reactors up and running by 2003. We say let there be national debate about this, let the energy policy be decided first, before we start building these things," Du Toit said.

Hermann Röhm, who heads Eskom's site selection programme, said the first step of buying land to use as a potential nuclear power station site was "far removed" from the final step of deciding to build one.

"We have to ensure we have the option to choose the most cost-effective generation of power in the future. We don't want to close the nuclear option now, as future generations may decide they need it and then find they don't have suitable sites on which to build nuclear power stations.

"The projections are that there will be no more coalfields available after 2050, so we have to look for alternatives now," Röhm said.

Eskom began selecting potential nuclear sites in the 1980s and examined the entire 3 200km SA coastline.

It needed to own all the land in a two-kilometre radius from a proposed nuclear power plant to meet safety requirements.

In the study to find suitable sites, the Transkei coast was excluded because in the apartheid days it was regarded as being across a "national" border, and was therefore a security risk.

The KwaZulu-Natal coast was also excluded because the level of seismic activity was too high and the population density along much of the coast was too high.

Other sites were eliminated for various reasons, from water supply to the feasibility of erecting transmission lines.

Eskom has said it is "highly unlikely" that nuclear power stations similar to that at Koeberg — a pressurised water reactor — will be built in this country. Any future nuclear power plants will probably be pebble bed modular reactors, which Eskom says are far smaller, safer and more economical.

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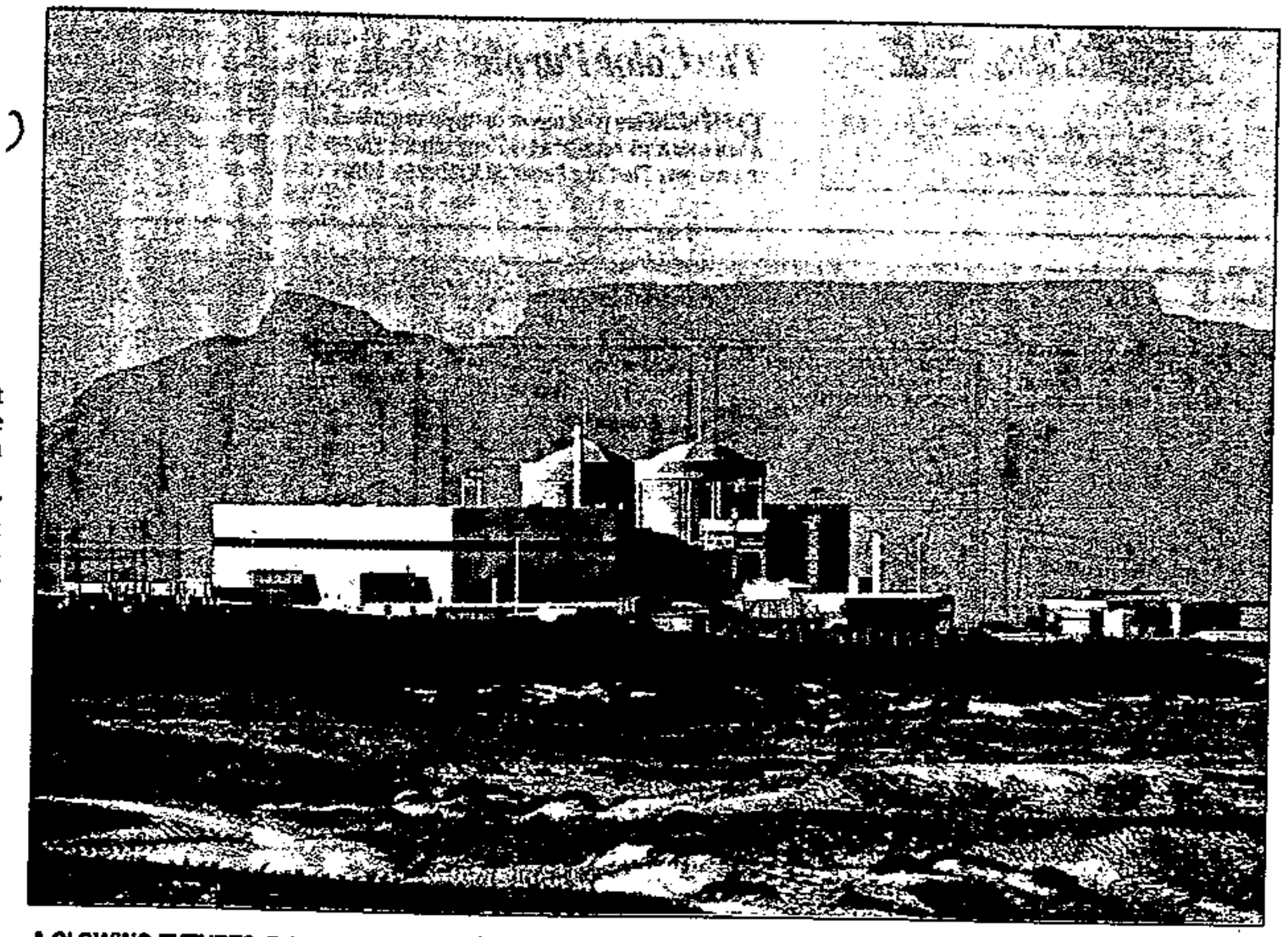
CNS spokesperson Phil Metcalf said yesterday: "We're embarking on a process to see if we can license it. This will take about a year, and we have engaged experts from Britain, France and Germany to assist us.

"The designs look very good on paper, but we need to demonstrate that they are good in practice. We're also looking at design criteria which will be subject to international peer review," Metcalf said.

Earthlife Africa spokesperson Davin Chown says the group objects to a proposed expansion of the country's nuclear industry.

"The rest of the world is scaling down nuclear power. Why are we wanting to expand it? SA still has no policy on nuclear waste, and there is still no answer about where the high-level (radioactive) waste will be stored," he said.



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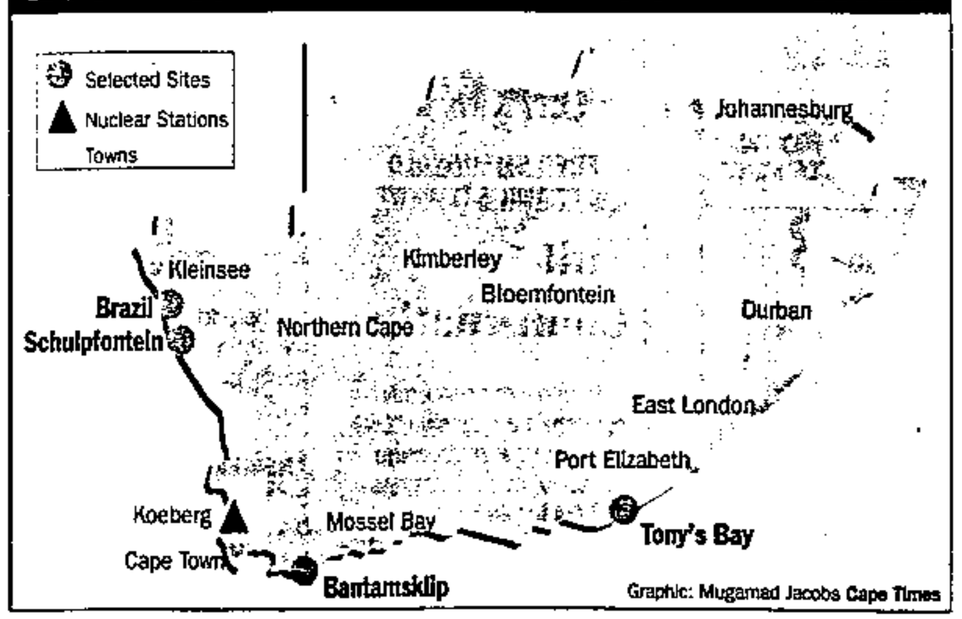
Cry of 'No nukes!' greets Eskom plan

CT 13/10/98 (56)

LOCATION OF SELECTED NUCLEAR SITES



Graphic: Mugamad Jacobs Cape Times

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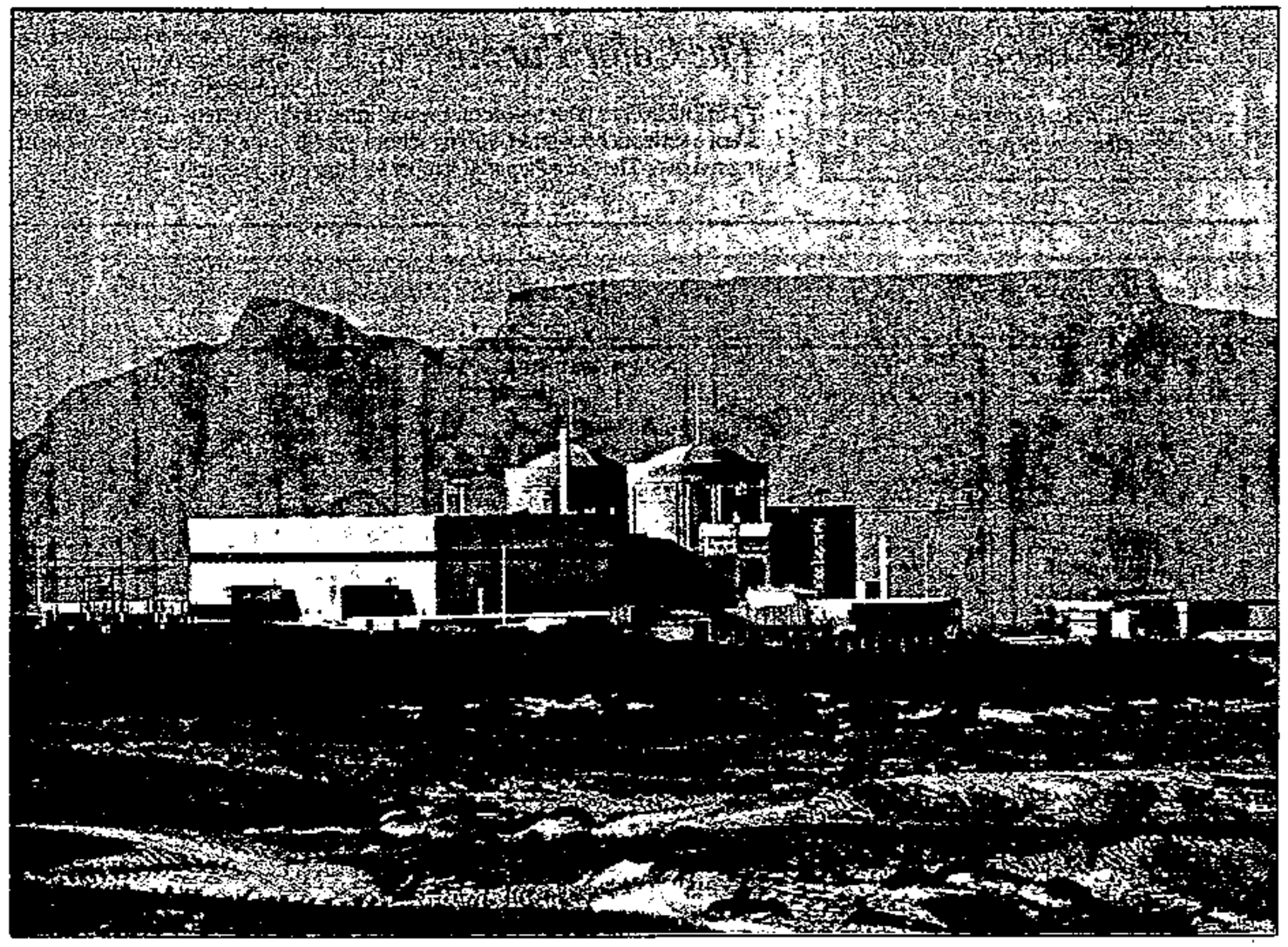

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'Priceless' Oudekraal on books at R202 700

(56)

New valuation due

ARG 14/10/98

LENORE OLIVER
STAFF REPORTER

Kasper Wiehahn's "priceless" Oudekraal property is worth only R202 700 – on paper.

This is the value of the extensive seafront and mountainside property in terms of the latest municipal valuation, carried out in 1974.

In real terms, if Mr Wiehahn is unable to get development rights, he may not be able to realise much more than that for the land because it is protected by a veritable thicket of zoning and legislation restrictions.

Meanwhile, Mr Wiehahn does not pay rates because the land is zoned rural, which is not rateable.

Phillip van Ryneveld, Cape Town Municipality executive director of corporate finance, said municipal valuations in some areas of Cape Town had not been done since 1974.

But the municipality was compiling an up-to-date valuation roll.

"This will be a long process, but we hope to get it going as soon as possible," he said.

Mr Wiehahn has offered R2-billion to the city for low-cost housing in return for the right to build high-density housing on a 4km ribbon of coastal land between Camps Bay and the new hotel at Oudekraal.

While the market value of the 400ha Oudekraal property could conceivably run into billions of rands if developed the way he wants it to be, it is doubtful Mr Wiehahn could ever realise its full financial potential because of the many restrictions imposed by zoning, title deeds and national monument laws.

Japie Hugo, municipal director of land and management, said the existing rural zoning permitted Mr Wiehahn to build a main dwelling and two labourers' cottages on each of the five portions of his land.

But even this limited development depended on many restrictive criteria.

Portions four, five, six and seven were national monuments and he would need the approval of the National Monuments Council before building.

There might also be species of flora and fauna on the land protected under environmental legislation.

Mr Hugo said that if Mr Wiehahn did not get development rights, whatever he decided to do with the land would have to be environmentally friendly.

If Mr Wiehahn's bid for development rights failed, an environmental impact assessment study would be carried out to determine the alternatives.

Wiehahn spells out vision of Oudekraal 'paradise'

Between bribe and threat – opponents

ARG 15/10/98 (56)

ANDREA WEISS
POLITICAL REPORTER

Oudekraal land-owner Kasper Wiehahn believes developing the land he owns along the Atlantic seaboard will make a great contribution to tourism.

He has a dream that his children will in the future go to sea, look back at a developed Oudekraal with pride and say: "You know, dad, or grandad, did something right!"

His vision is for a high density development, using the small cliffs to off-set low-rise flats with open spaces in between.

He also dreams of building a giant "arc de triomphe" along this coast to immortalise those who buy into any housing project there because their contribution will be a "donation" to the country's future.

Mr Wiehahn, who has thrown the cat among the pigeons by offering R2-billion for low-cost housing in exchange for development rights at Oudekraal, was addressing the Cape Town Press Club.

He said Oudekraal was a "very small piece of land" within the Cape Peninsula, with only half of its 400ha open for development, because the rest fell above the 150m contour line.

"The beauty of Oudekraal will have a bigger attraction to tourism by being developed than by not being developed," he said.

If the decision was that portions six, five, four and even three remained undeveloped, those who wanted the land should buy it as a "matter of respect for the owner".

He said he would also consider a land swop.

He claimed he had already spent R3,5-million on an engineering plan for portion seven, the part that, in his view, had township development rights. He said he had not tested these rights in court because he did not believe the 1957 township plan was still appropriate.

His lawyers had, however, advised him that his rights for developing portion seven were "pretty sound", he said.

Mr Wiehahn compared his vision for Oudekraal with the development of Sun City, the Waterfront and, more recently, Century City.

He said his family bought the land from Sir Philip Henry Price in 1965 with the view to developing it one day, not piecemeal, but according to a single plan.

He suggested that his figure of R2-billion offered for low-income housing might be "understated".

Asked whether he would not be better remembered if he gave the land to Cape Town, Mr Wiehahn said he thought it was "unfair" for a individual to donate that much.

"I think everybody should make a donation. Let's have the silver platter out and I'll take that money in exchange for the land."

■ In a letter handed to reporters after the meeting, the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa said it believed Mr Wiehahn's offer amounted to "something between a threat and a bribe".

Grazing agreement may put an end to hippo slaughter at Rondevlei

(56) ARG 17/10/98

LINDA DANIELS

A solution could be on the cards to end the savage drama in Cape Town's Rondevlei nature reserve where Brutus the hippo has systematically killed his offspring.

Brutus, the giant bull hippo, has killed up to nine hippo calves because of the shortage of grazing in the reserve.

Municipal red tape has delayed a solution to talks on extending the reserve to provide enough grazing for Brutus, two hippo cows Portia and Cleo, and their future calves.

But after dragging on for months, talks between the Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC), which owns the adjacent land, and the South Peninsula Municipality appear to be bearing fruit at last.

A compromise agreement is now said to be close for the CMC to lease land next to Rondevlei to the municipality for 20 years to extend the reserve and provide enough grazing to preserve the only hippo population in the Western Cape.

Julia Wood of the municipality's environmental management branch, said the proposed extension to the east of Rondevlei was well-grassed.

Part of the land earmarked as a hippo grazing area is occupied by the False Bay Sewerage Works and is owned by the CMC.

Ms Wood said the South Peninsula had made a proposal to the CMC to lease the land.

"We don't actually care now, we just want the land. We just want to get it up and going," Ms Wood said.

Allan Maxwell, head of planning and design at the CMC, said that it was probable the matter could be solved this year but the land had to have a technical, legal and planning assessment before anything could be decided.

He also said that the land might be used for sewerage purposes in the future.

"They've all got various priorities. These things take their time," Mr Maxwell said.

"We have a whole host of other problems and this is not at the top of the pile."

A donation of R300 000 has been promised by the South Peninsula Municipality for fencing in the proposed extended hippo grazing area. But the offer stands until June next year.

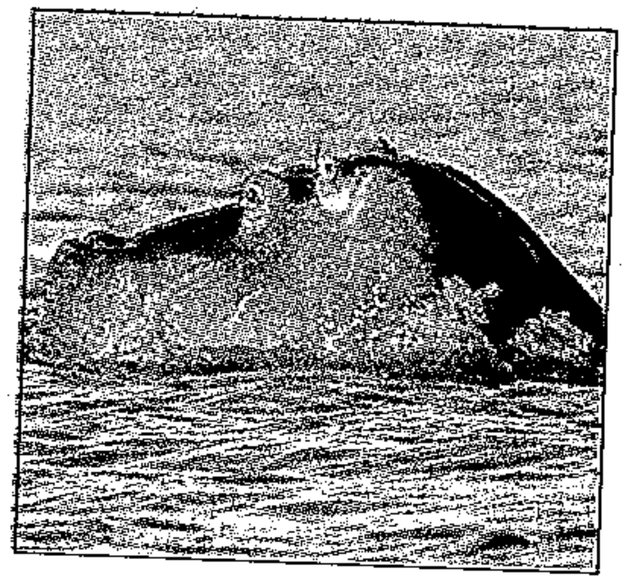
Dalton Gibbs, a reserve manager at Rondevlei, said: "Personally I doubt that we will get that kind of offer again. People don't just throw money at conservation."

He said that ownership of the land was not the issue and that a long term lease lasting 99 years would be ideal.

Mr Gibbs said that fencing the land was very expensive, which was why a long term lease was required.

The head of environmental management of the CMC, Stephen Granger, said that reports from both the CMC and the South Peninsula Municipality needed to be submitted to the standing committees of both councils before any decision could be made about the land.

He said: "It's a political process and it moves fairly slowly and for good reasons but we are certainly not dragging our heels on this one."



HUNGRY: Brutus the bull hippo

The Star ... Monday October 19 1998

Surprise raids on Parks Board officials' homes

Star 19/10/98

Heath special investigative unit seizes documents and computers

By Justin Arenstein
African Eye News Service

Government investigators have seized documents and computers believed to hold the key to secret deals totalling more than R13,8-billion during a series of surprise raids.

The raids, requested by the Heath special investigative unit, led to the seizure of documents from the houses of two Mpumalanga Parks Board officials and computers from the parastatal's offices in Nelspruit on Thursday.

The provincial government investigators may not be named for fear of reprisals, and reportedly had to threaten the officials with criminal charges and imprisonment before they were granted access to some of the records.

Judge Willem Heath stressed that the incidents were not part of a formal search-and-seizure operation but confirmed that sensitive material relating to his probe into six illegal promissory notes had been confiscated.

Heath said the documents and computers had been placed in safekeeping, and would be examined by his investigators on Wednesday.

Neither Mpumalanga's environmental affairs MEC, Fish Mahlalela, nor the MPB's acting chief executive officer, Abe Sibiya, were informed of the raids beforehand.

Records seized from the houses of MPB finance director Nicholas Krugel and an as yet unnamed secretary to Sibiya are believed to include double accounting records for the parastatal. They are also believed to include secret records of the R12,5-billion Dolphin deal and the issue of R1,3-billion in illegal promissory notes.

Premier Mathews Phosa, in a speech on Friday, hinted that the raid would most likely show whether suspended MPB chief Alan Gray had bought clothes and a vehicle for a prominent provincial political figure with state funds.

Phosa said the records might also assist Heath to prove whether the MPB had irregularly paid the private legal expenses in a criminal case for the same person and whether Gray made large loans to prominent leaders from state funds.

"The records may also indicate whether it is true that such information was removed from the MPB's offices and hidden privately at great danger to those requested to do the safekeeping," said Phosa.

Other allegations expected to be answered with the information include indications that Gray paid salaries of people outside the parks board with state funds, paid or received commissions for controversial contracts, and failed to use acceptable accounting practices to record the transactions.

"It appears that guilty MPB officials are continuing to sneak information out of their offices right under the noses of the auditor-general and Judge Heath, but this raid has changed things and the next week is going to be very interesting," Phosa added.

Vital members: Kruger Park officials realise that they cannot manage the reserve solely for the benefit of the elephants, but they recognise that the animals are a significant component of the park system and that they contribute to biodiversity

Elephants' impact to be monitored

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The Kruger National Park has embarked on an intensive experiment, which will span several decades, to determine the impact their elephants have on the park.

For the past 30 years the elephant population has been kept between 7 000 and 7 500 but current estimates are that there are over 8 300 elephants in the two million hectare park.

Over the years, park officials have been actively exploring ways to control elephant populations, including the controversial culling and contraceptive methods.

Data collected in the park shows that while other species are controlled by 20-year climatic cycles, the elephants are immune to these cycles.

Dr Leo Braack, acting general manager for conservation in the park, said data collected in the park over the past three decades showed that many of the large animal species populations directly responded to these climatic changes.

According to Dr Braack, the buffalo population dipped significantly in the 1982 drought and was again halved – from 28 000 to 13 000 – during the 1992 drought. This was a natural response due to insufficient grass for the animals to feed on.

"Other less dramatic examples can be mentioned, but the point is that over the years we've learnt that we needn't cull impala, and we needn't cull wildebeest, nor buffalo. These populations appear to be naturally regulated. But not so elephant and possibly rhino.

"Elephants simply continue to subsist on trees or switch their food preferences, riding the onslaught of drought with near-impunity," said Dr Braack.

While he admits that they cannot manage the park solely for the benefit of the elephant, they recognise that the animals are a significant component of the park system – contributing to the biodiversity.

It is for this reason a new system has been devised to monitor the extent of elephant impact on the park.

The park will be divided into six zones to determine the impact of elephant populations over the next few decades.

According to Dr Braack, two of the zones are botanical reserves, with a range of rare and endangered plants.

In two of the remaining four zones the elephants will be allowed unrestricted reproduction over several decades.

"The other two zones are low impact areas where elephant numbers will be actively reduced through live capture or culling and contraception as a future possibility," said Dr Braack.

The elephant management plan has been devised with extensive input from local and international academics and wildlife managers.

The rot is setting in at cash-strapped parks

ARG 19/10/98 (56)

ROSS HERBERT

Across Africa, the slow financial strangulation of national parks is a familiar story – one which conservationists fear is now beginning to play itself out in South Africa.

With too little money to pay teachers, properly manage hospitals, repair roads or deliver clean water, cash-strapped governments have gradually shifted attention and money away from conservation to more immediately pressing human needs.

Park budgets winnow away. Anti-poaching patrols gradually cease. Park vehicles break down and are not repaired.

Revenue-generating lodges and restaurants in national parks run down and tourists gradually stop coming.

This week, a board of investigation looking into South African nature conservation gave its report to Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Pallo Jordan.

Headed by Mr Justice Mark Kumleben of the Supreme Court of Appeal, the board also included John Ledger, director of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, and Stan Sangweni.

They found that the 19 parks managed by the National Parks Board were coping, but "the situation in the provinces is parlous and, in some instances, desperate".

At a time when there is not enough money for teachers, hospitals are under pressure, ambulance services are being cut, and many children go without schoolbooks, I fear it will be all too easy for politicians to dismiss provincial parks as too far down the priority list to warrant attention.

That would be a tragic mistake. Unlike most of Africa, nearly half the protected land area in South Africa is managed at provincial level.

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry manages 72 protected areas, the National Parks Board 19 and the provinces 331.

Increasing provincial funding was a matter of "extreme urgency", said the report.

Without the extra cash, many provincial parks "will have no chance of surviving".

Tourism is South Africa's largest industry, one of the few capable of providing increased employment and trade opportunities to isolated rural communities.

The Kumleben report, as it is known, notes that the Kruger National Park alone generates R3-billion to R5-billion in economic benefit to South Africa, vastly more than the National Parks Board's entire budget of R375-million.

Proper maintenance of assets – whether roads, schools, sewers or parks – is never going to be a sexy political campaign issue.

But once any state asset is allowed to decay into ruin, it is always vastly more expensive to rebuild it than it would have been to maintain.

Cape Nature Conservation's budget has been cut from R55m to R39m in three years

How bad is the situation? Provincial parks boards said deep budget cuts had resulted in staff cuts, a reduction in poaching patrols, cuts in road and fence maintenance, the reduction of community outreach programmes.

Cuts also caused neglect of valuable wild lands surrounding parks vital to protected ecosystems.

George Hughes, head of the KwaZulu Natal Parks Board, is quoted in the board report as saying that the funding neglect of conservation at provincial level bordered on "criminal oversight", even although the KwaZulu board was considered the most fiscally sound of the nine provincial ones.

This year, the board took a 20% cut in its government subsidy.

Funding has been similarly slashed in all provinces except Gauteng, which has slightly increased conservation funding this year.

Cape Nature Conservation, the Western Cape provincial conservation department, has seen its budget cut from R55-million three years ago to R39-million this year.

"We are unable to maintain our existing infrastructure. We just don't have capital expenditures any more to maintain chalets and roads.

"And there is absolutely nothi available to develop new facilitie said Kas Hamman, acting director the Cape agency.

"Many of our reserves where used to have 70 people (staff) n have less than 10."

The problem highlights a broad crisis in provincial governance South Africa that we can no long ignore.

While the national governme has kept to a modest fiscal deficit whole array of disasters lurks in t provinces.

The parks, the failure to provi schoolbooks, unpaid pension provincial departments that cann pay their phone bills – these are t incipient signs of fiscal rot that w eventually eat its way up throu government.

Those issues must be examined national level and the African Natio al Congress, Inkatha Freedom Par and National Party must be he accountable at national level for the stewardship of provinces under the control.

To prevent our provincial park from going the way of parks in t rest of Africa, the Kumleben repo recommends looking closely at number of ideas.

Parks in the United States, fo example, are funded in part throug an excise tax on hunting, sportin and recreational gear.

KwaZulu Natal, Mpumalanga an the National Parks Board are ma aged as parastatals able to raise an keep their own funds, a model tha should be considered for the othe provinces.

At provincial level, conservatio is variously buried in governmen departments dedicated to agricul ture, tourism, and economic affairs.

The Kumleben report recom mends it be established as a separat government department at nationa and provincial level.

Non-governmental organisation and welfare groups are now quietl lobbying for access to the proceeds o the proposed national lottery, whic may generate as much as R5-billion i revenue.

Conservation has been considere for a tiny sliver of that, but ought to b granted a solid 10 or 20% stake – Independent Foreign Service

CAPE TIMES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1998

WORLD DAY OF ACTION OVER MULTINATIONAL'S PRACTICES

City activists join McDonald's protest

(56) CT 19/10/98

GROUPS of South Africans across the country held protests over the weekend outside McDonald's fast-food outlets, including its Cavendish Square branch, to mark World Day of Action Against McDonald's. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

IN the mid-1980s, environmental group London Greenpeace published a leaflet entitled *What's Wrong with McDonald's? — Everything they don't want you to know.*

It criticised the corporation for its treatment of animals, bad effects on the environment, unhealthy food and poor employment practices.

It would probably have gone unnoticed had the McDonald's Corporation ignored it.

Instead they paid spies to infiltrate London Greenpeace and in 1990 took legal action against two members, Helen Steel and Dave Morris.

This led to the longest libel case in British history. It became known as the McLibel case and was soon the focus of public interest far beyond London.

As a result, the McLibel Support Campaign sprung up — as did an Internet site called McSpotlight, which has had more than seven million "hits" in two years.

Last year activists in 26 countries took part in protests outside McDonald's on the World Day of Action against the corporation. This year South Africa joined in.

At the Cavendish Square outlet on Saturday a group of picketers held up banners decrying the corporation, while inside customers chomped Big Macs seemingly unperturbed.

Said one of the picketers: "We are protesting against the big multinationals who force-feed us a Western consumerist lifestyle."

"We're against multinationals who force-feed us a Western consumerist lifestyle."

McDonald's feeds about 35 million people a day, spends about $1 billion a year on advertising in the US alone, and has 21 000 restaurants in 101 countries.

A study has found that its trademark golden arches are the second most widely recognised symbols in the world after the Olympic rings and ahead of the Christian cross.

British journalist John Vidal wrote a book on the McDonald's trial, entitled *McLibel*, in which he states: "I cannot think of a case in which the legal cards had been so spectacularly stacked against one party."

Vidal writes that the corporation had served writs on about 50 publications, including the *Guardian* and *Sunday Times*, on trade unions, green groups and even a Scottish youth theatre group, threatening to sue them if they did not retract statements.

The corporation has 70 protected logos and names, including the words "You", "Royal" and "Mc".

Vidal tells of a Scottish woman, Mary Blair, who opened a sandwich bar called McMunchies.

McDonald's gave Blair 14 days to take down her sign, failing which they would sue her.

Wrote Vidal: "Mrs Blair was furious. Did that mean the corporation owned half the names in Scotland?"

Many say McDonald's made a serious miscalculation when they took Morris and Steel to court.

Writes Vidal: "There is a proud delight in Britain of seeing giants felled, bullies getting their come-uppance, the amateur beating the professional and the underdog having its day."

By going to court, he says, McDonald's was opened to public scrutiny as never before.

And the corporation found itself on trial.

"They had turned a fleabite on their big toe into a pustulating boil all over the body corporate."

Last year the "McLibel" judgment was given, seven years after McDonald's first sued Morris and Steel.

The court found that Morris and Steel had failed to prove their allegations that McDonald's was linked to rainforest destruction, starvation in the Third World, littering from packaging, heart disease and bad working conditions.

"They had turned a fleabite on their toe into a pustulating boil all over the body corporate."

However, they had shown that McDonald's "exploit children" with its advertising, falsely advertise their food as nutritious, are "culpably responsible" for cruelty to animals reared for their products, are "strongly antipathetic" to unions and pay low wages.

The court ruled that Morris and Steel had libelled McDonald's but that as they had proved some of the allegations, the company would be awarded only half of the claimed damages: £60 000.

What was McLibel really about?

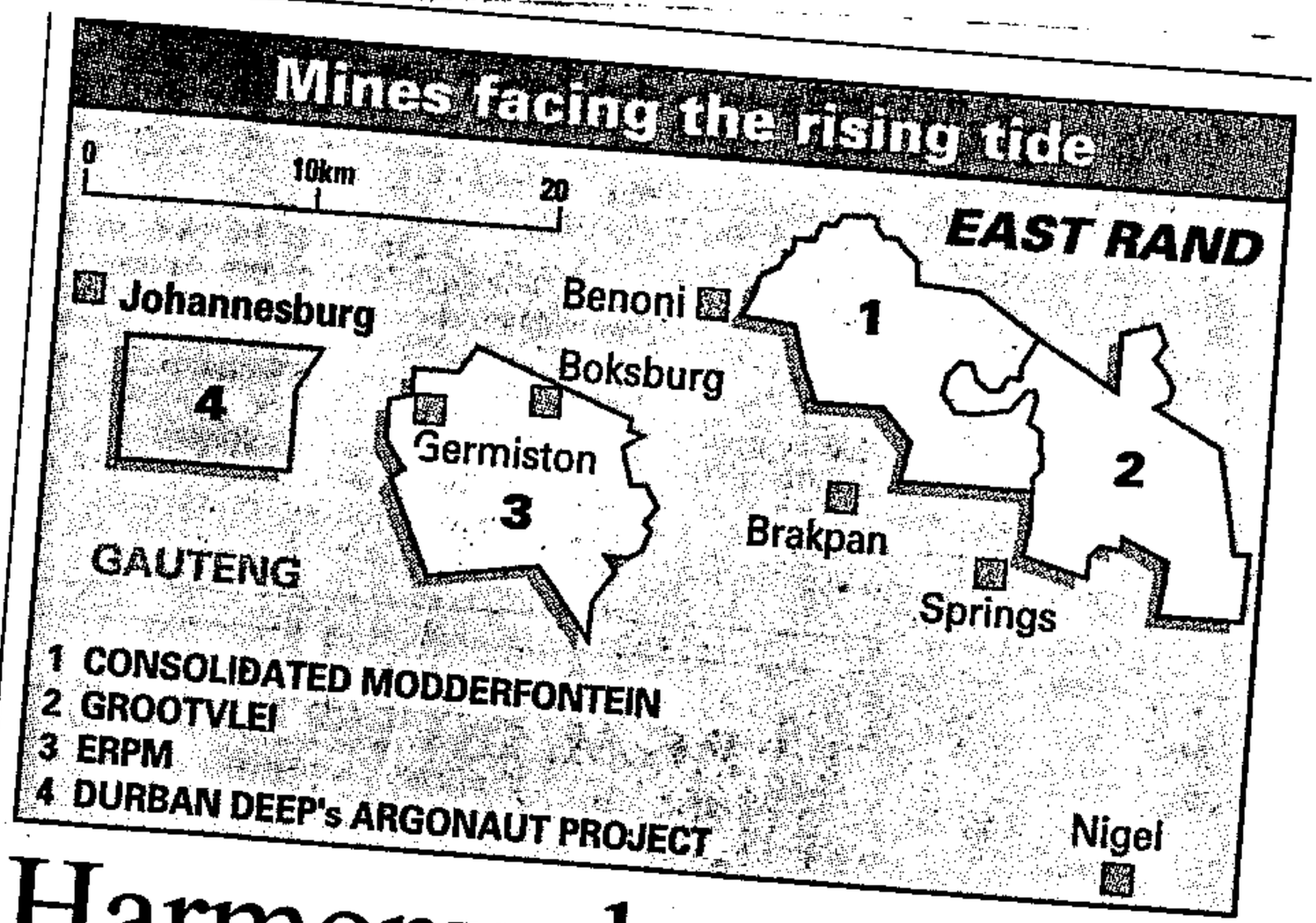
Vidal argues that it was about people's growing objection to the scale of market globalisation, a system based on capital not social responsibility.

While world trade has increased by a multiple of 12 since 1950, and economic growth by five, there have been massive increases in poverty, unemployment, social distintegration and environmental destruction.

Governments are increasingly handing over their responsibilities to multinationals, which Vidal describes as the most dramatic shift in power since colonialism began or communism ended.

Globalisation means that large multinationals "control more money than many national economies, are barely subject to outside scrutiny, are unaccountable, unquestioned and barely watched".

Far more sinister, he says, is the role of the state in silencing criticism against corporations. "If globalism is growing, so too is the repression of those who stand against it."



Harmony closures may lead to watery grave

BD 20/10/98 (56)

David McKay

SA GOLD-mining group Harmony yesterday raised the prospect of closing its two East Rand gold mines and walking away from paying for the majority of water contamination liabilities.

The move is likely to raise the ire of government, which has said that SA's mining companies are liable for pollution costs.

The closure of the two mines, Grootvlei and Consolidated Modderfontein, will eventually lead to underground mine water seeping out at Nigel, possibly in about four years. However it will also interfere with the marginal mines that are still operating in the region.

Government has steadfastly stuck to the view that the polluter pays for the pumping and cleansing of underground water.

In the East Rand gold mining industry, however, no single gold mine is responsible for the water.

The problem stems from when underground mine workings are flooded from both the water table and from surface sources, usually rainwater.

Harmony CE Bernard Swanepoel said his company was responsible for only 6% of the 120-million litres a day that are pumped and treated from the East Rand mines.

Grootvlei built purification facilities several years ago following a previous run-in with government, but these would become obsolete when the mine closed.

The mines may be closed as government pumping subsidies supplied to Harmony have been falling, making it less profitable for the group to operate the mines.

Harmony employs about 1 900 people in the East Rand.

Continued on Page 2

Harmony

(56)

Continued from Page 1

BD 20/10/98

Swanepoel said there were several parties interested in buying the gold mines, but he "favoured" turning the pumps off at Grootvlei and mining the operation until underground water flooded the shafts.

He said that legally, government was responsible for the water at the end of the day.

Barbara Schreiner, an official from the water affairs and forestry department, said the mining companies would not be able to walk away from the issue of underground water.

If all solutions to resolve the matter were exhausted, it was government and ultimately the taxpayer that would have to foot the bill for treating the water, she said.

Underground water from the mines is normally polluted with ferrous materials and tends to be very salty, threatening wildlife, for example.

Analysts said the possibility of Harmony not pumping water had far-reaching consequences.

Additional pressure would be placed on mines left operating in the East Rand basin, such as East Rand Proprietary Mines, ironically a mine in which government has a large stake.

The rising water table, created by Grootvlei no longer pumping, could also interfere with plans by Durban Roodepoort Deep to develop a new gold resource, the Argonaut project. This would have to be renamed the "Aquanaut Project", one analyst quipped.

Harmony quarterlies: Page 13

City launches probe as contractors dump toxic waste in Philippi

(56) ARG 20/10/98

Suspect: a tanker is found pumping liquid waste into a stormwater drain

MYOLISI GOPHE, NORMAN JOSEPH AND JOHN YELD

Contractors are dumping hundreds of thousands of litres of toxic waste from industrial premises into stormwater drains and the bush at Philippi.

The dumping charges have been levelled by a factory owner who has raised his concerns with the Cape Town Municipality.

Toxic waste dumped in the bush could pollute the vast aquifer (underground water) of the Cape Flats, which is earmarked as a potential future water supply for Cape Town.

And some of the liquid waste in the stormwater drains will end up in False Bay.

One of the offenders is allegedly a moonlighting City of Cape Town employee using a municipal vehicle.

Another of three waste tankers spotted dumping illegally during the past six weeks is allegedly owned by an employee of the South Peninsula Municipality's cleansing department.

When the drivers of two tankers were confronted by factory owner Russell Rathbone last Friday, neither could produce the required permit.

Pumping from one of the vehicles was seen by officials of the Cape Town cleansing branch, who were accompanying Mr Rathbone on an inspection after he complained that an earlier letter to the council drawing attention to the problem had been ignored for a month.

Mr Rathbone said the officials had confirmed the contents of the truck, which smelled strongly of apparent industrial effluent, were being pumped into a stormwater drain.

The drain is in the middle of a major new road being built to service a new housing project between the R300 Cape Flats freeway and the Philippi industrial area.

When the Cape Argus visited the site yesterday, a length of piping leading into the stormwater drain was still lying in the road.

A sandy track in nearby bush, where Mr Rathbone photographed a municpal tanker discharging its load, is heavily coated with what appears to be thick black effluent.

Mr Rathbone said the driver of one of the private tankers had produced receipts showing that tens of thousands of litres of liquid waste had been removed from factories and industrial premises in the Philippi area over the past few days.

Factories in the Philippi industrial area have septic tanks from which sewage is removed by tankers periodically. But this is supposed to be discharged into an official sewerage line and is subject to a permit.

Mr Rathbone said the sample of the discharged effluent he had taken on Friday clearly had not been sewage.

A relative newcomer to Philippi, he had asked the previous owner of his premises how often he had pumped out his sewage, and had been told this had been necessary only about once every two years.

"We watched 30 000 litres being pumped down the stormwater drain in 20 minutes with no authorisation and no supervision. And the driver didn't even close the manhole cover afterwards," he said.

"This kind of thing is giving my industry a bad name and I'm very concerned about this.

"Everyone tells me this is the 'Fairest Cape', but I'm absolutely horrified."

One of the factories named in the receipts is a drum-refurbishing business which, according to the receipts, discharged 30 000 litres in just four days at the beginning of this month.

The owner told the Cape Argus that he would be prepared to discuss the issue today.

Kendall Kaveney, the City of Cape Town's director of water and waste, confirmed that he had ordered an urgent investigation into the dumping and would respond in detail today to questions by the Cape Argus.

Larry Eichstadt, assistant director of water quality management in the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, said yesterday that contractors removing industrial waste had to dispose of this at the official landfill site at Vissershok, where a safe disposal certificate would be issued.

RUSSELL RATHBONE

Trail of a polluter: a track in the Philippi bush where a waste tanker discharged its load

Pouring out poison: the 10 000-litre load of a Cape Town municipality liquid waste tanker is illegally discharged in a disused corner of the council's Klipfontein cleansing depot yesterday

JOHN YELD

Now municipal cleansers join Philippi waste dumping

(56) ARG 21/10/98

JOHN YELD AND MYOLISI GOPHE

The City of Cape Town's cleansing branch has been seen discharging liquid waste in a disused corner of its own Klipfontein depot at Philippi.

This discovery comes a day after it was revealed in the Cape Argus that hundreds of thousands of litres of toxic waste from the Philippi industrial area were being illegally discharged into the bush and into stormwater drains in the area.

And the man who blew the whistle on the dumping – Philippi-based businessman Russell Rathbone, who has a drum-reconditioning company – says he was threatened just hours after telling his story to the Cape Argus.

The illegal dumping is adding to pollution of the huge Cape Flats aquifer (underground water), which is viewed as one of metropolitan Cape Town's vital future water sources.

It is probably also boosting pollution levels in False Bay.

Mr Rathbone said one of the private operators allegedly involved in the illegal dumping of liquid waste had contacted him on his cellphone about 6pm on Monday and threatened him because he was "ruining the business".

He was also contacted by another of the private operators, who asked: "What's going on?"

"I told him I couldn't accept what was happening," said Mr Rathbone.

"As long as I've got air in my lungs I'll continue to act over the blatant disregard for our environment – whether this is on the Cape Flats or on Table Mountain."

Mr Rathbone contacted the Cape Argus yesterday to say he had seen a council waste tanker apparently removing liquid waste from a company operating near his premises in Philippi.

In September he had photographed the same council vehicle – on that occasion driven by a different employee – illegally dumping liquid waste into the bush nearby.

Yesterday, he followed the tanker from the company to the grounds of the Klipfontein depot and watched while it discharged a full 10 000-litre load on to the ground in a corner of the property.

Mr Rathbone took a sample of the liquid and then contacted the Cape Argus.

When a reporter arrived at the depot with Mr Rathbone about 1.45pm, the ground in the area was still wet and stank heavily.

While they were inspecting the site, the same tanker returned and started to discharge another load. This time the waste

To page 3

Municipal tankers join in dumping

(56) ARG 21/10/98

From page 1

liquid was clearer, but also stank badly.

The liquid, which appeared to have come from a different business, poured out of the tanker on to the ground – and flowed away across the sand into thick weeds.

All toxic waste – called "intractable" waste by the council – is supposed to be taken to the official landfill site at Vissershok, north of Milnerton, where it must be signed off as having been properly disposed of.

All sewage waste is supposed to be discharged into a dedicated point, connected to the official sewerage system, in Klipfontein Road.

The council has launched an immediate inquiry into the latest dumping incident, and is still probing the earlier illegal dumping.

Kendall Kaveney, the city's director of waste and water, said he was shocked at the revelations. "There is a full investigation underway, and I've briefed everyone concerned."

Kruger buffaloes shot in bid to stop spread of TB

(56) Star 22/10/98

Sabie – Wildlife officials have begun culling buffalo in the Kruger National Park to stop the spread of tuberculosis among the park's lions.

Lions have picked up the fatal disease after feeding on infected Cape buffalo, their natural prey.

Researchers say that more than 90% of the lions tested in the southern part of the park are infected with the disease.

Conservation officials are so fearful of the disease infecting all of Kruger's 1 500 to 2 000 lions that they are considering slaughtering 8 000 Cape buffalo or building a fence across the park to contain the diseased animals.

This week scientists aboard a helicopter swooped into a valley where a herd of buffalo grazed. A scientist aimed a rifle at one of the animals and fired a dart into its flank. The buffalo dropped. Minutes later, 19 buffalo were dead or dying from lethal doses of muscle relaxant.

Scientists dissected the animals on the spot and the carcasses and body parts were loaded onto trucks and taken away for study.

Because the disease is ingested, the lion's intestines are the first to be affected. The lion will develop intestinal lesions before the disease spreads to lymph nodes and other organs.

Cape buffalo contracted TB by mingling with infected cattle herds in the 1950s, before the park's boundary was fenced off.

About a month ago 32 of 33 lions south of the Sabie River were confirmed as having TB.

Authorities say the disease has hit other species. In August, TB in leopards was discovered after one of the cats, possibly too weak from the disease to hunt other prey, sneaked up on a ranger and killed him. – Sapa-AP

CAPE ARGUS, **THURSDAY**, OCTOBER 22, 1998

Kruger Park lions face TB massacre

(56) ARG 22/10/98

Buffalo meat spreads disease

Sabie – Southern Africa's majestic lions are facing perhaps their biggest threat since man began hunting them – deadly tuberculosis that is reducing them to "a skeleton covered in skin".

Lions in Kruger National Park, one of the world's largest game reserves, have picked up the fatal disease after feeding on infected Cape buffalo, their natural prey.

Researchers say that more than 90% of the lions tested in the southern part of the vast park are infected with the disease. It is suspected of cutting the number of adult lions in one study area from 25 to 12 in little more than two years.

Conservation and wildlife officials normally allow nature to go unchecked in the park, but they are so fearful of the disease infecting all of Kruger's more than 1 500 lions that they are considering slaughtering 8 000 Cape buffalo – or building a fence across the park to contain the diseased animals.

"We cannot allow this disease to spread," said Emily Mogajane, director of animal health for the Ministry of Agriculture.

Scientists are trying to determine how widespread the TB is before making a decision.

Scientists on board a helicopter this week swooped into a valley where a herd of buffalo grazed in the shade of thorn trees. One with a rifle fired darts and, minutes later, 19 were dead or dying from lethal doses of muscle relaxant.

Thirty scientists and helpers descended from a convoy of all-terrain vehicles and dissected the animals on the spot. About 40 vultures hovered overhead, but pickings were slim – the carcasses and body parts were loaded on to trucks and taken away for study.

Skin tests can detect the presence of TB without killing the animal, but only an autopsy can show how far the disease has spread, and how long the animal has been sick.

Dewald Keet, Kruger's chief veterinarian, held a buffalo's lung and said: "A lion that eats this will get a huge dose of TB."

It could take several years to die from the TB itself, but its weakened condition made it an easier target for rival lions. – Sapa-AP

Farmers refuse to budge from their ancestral land

By McKeed Kotlolo (56)

A GROUP of black subsistence farmers in Mpumalanga's flagship game park, who have resisted forced removal from their ancestral land for more than 15 years, vowed to fight to the death for their land.

About 82 families had their farms fenced into the Songimvelo game park next to Barberton about 14 years ago by the then KaNgwane homeland government after they refused to be resettled.

In addition to the fight to retain their fertile land, the farmers are now faced with the problem of wild animals, including rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses and buffaloes, that destroy their crops and threaten their lives.

Despite this the group, whose properties are scattered in the mountains and along the Komati River between Barberton and the Swaziland border, told *Sowetan* that they were not going anywhere. "We will continue to farm here until the authorities decide to arrest or kill us," they said.

A 71-year-old pensioner, Mrs Gegule Lizzie Shiba, was gored and trampled to death by a rhino as she was driving her herd of cattle home on September 28. Her body was found two days after the incident.

This was confirmed by Sergeant Hezekiel Msibi of the Eastern Highveld police, who said they were waiting for post-mortem results.

The farmers also claimed that all those who left the area after they were allegedly compensated by the government, had lost almost everything they possessed.

They also told *Sowetan* they were ready to continue the resistance which started during the apartheid days.

"The solution should come from the government. It should either remove the fence around us or put up another fence separating us from the wild animals," said Mr Boy Mazibuko (45), who vowed to die fighting for his ancestral land.

He said the remaining people in the area "know no other type of life than farming".

"If we were forced to leave, where would we find grazing for our herds?" he asked.

Mazibuko said the wild animals made farming impossible for the community.

"They destroy our crops and restrict our movements as well as make it difficult for our children to go to school."

Sowetan 29/10/96

City's dirtiest beaches named

Three Anchor Bay is worst offender

(56) ARG 24/10/98

JACKIE CAMERON

Every time you revel in the waves on a Peninsula beach you are surrounding yourself with tiny particles of potentially hazardous human and animal faeces.

And don't take a splash in a Western Cape river: every stream picks up an ever-increasing load of human excrement on its downward journey to the sea.

All rivers that fall under the jurisdiction of the Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC) have been declared "highly polluted" and unfit for drinking and recreation purposes.

But some beaches are worse than others when it comes to faecal contamination.

According to the latest annual tests to determine the average faecal bacteria levels at beaches around the Peninsula, Three Anchor Bay has the dirtiest water on the Atlantic Coast. Camps Bay and Table View have the cleanest.

Beaches buffeting Mitchell's Plain compete with the Muizenberg Pavilion and Kalk Bay Harbour for the dubious status of having the most contaminated water in False Bay.

Bacteria tests at Bakoven Bungalows, Saunders Rocks, Sunset Beach pool and Long Beach also reveal that bathers may be swimming with far more than just the fish.

The cleaner areas, although not free from faeces, include Milnerton Beach, Melkbosstrand and the Silverstroom and Monwabisi tidal pools.

Faecal bacteria can cause a range of illnesses, from diarrhoea to eye, nose and throat infections.

Herbert Oberhofer, the CMC's waste water chief, gave Saturday Argus a sneak preview of the latest annual report on water quality monitoring. The report will be released later this month.

He said that swelling stormwater drains are believed to be behind surges in bacteriological counts at many of the dirtier coastal spots.

According to Danie Klopper, CMC's chief of scientific services, moves are afoot to investigate the source of a constant flow of faecal pollution that comes from the Mitchell's Plain stormwater canals into False Bay.

He said: "We test for health reasons, and normally signs are put up to warn bathers if it is not acceptable to swim.

"We take samples from the surf. We test at swimming spots as well as where we know there could be pollution. Our samplers wade in to knee level to conduct the tests."

Rivers, including those that look tantalisingly clear, are alarmingly high carriers of faecal bacteria.

"The rivers are polluted. Sewage effluent flows down the rivers to the sea. The effluent has to comply with the standards set by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry," said Mr Kloppers.

When asked whether they should be considered no-go areas, Mr Klopper said: "I've seen children paddling and playing in polluted rivers. It all depends on your level of immunity to disease. The more sterile the environment you grow up in, the more susceptible you will be to disease."

Tourists roped into weeding out aliens in Western Cape mountains

ARG 24/10/98

ANDREA WEISS

Tourists will soon be able to pay for the privilege of wiping out alien vegetation on Cape mountains – and get the T-shirt to prove it.

Working for Water, an award-winning national programme to restore the country's catchment areas, is planning to open its operations to tourists to provide an ongoing source of work for the people they have trained to remove alien vegetation.

The tourists, in turn, will get a unique mountain experience and meet the locals.

At an open day in Ceres this week, Stephen Lamb, the manager of the mountain wilderness area teams, explained that the tourists would work side-by-side with the teams who hack away the alien in some of the Cape's more remote mountainous areas.

But it won't all be hard work, says Mr Lamb. "It won't be an army camp," he said. "The idea is centres on relaxation.

"One of the things tourists want to do is interact with the locals. When tourists come here, they don't want to sit at the Waterfront and watch a movie. They want to see how we're doing in the new South Africa."

Tourists will also have the opportunity to learn skills such as abseiling, first aid and orienteering. They will go on hikes, learn more about the unique fynbos vegetation and spend time in remote mountain areas with the Working for Water teams.

They may have to be flown in by helicopters, or else they will walk into the mountains, perhaps doing a spot of trout-fishing along the way.

Three areas targeted for tourism ventures are the 6 800ha Ceres Fynbos Mountain Reserve, the Hottentots Holland Mountain Reserve near Grabouw and land near Genadendal.

Mr Lamb said the project's objective was to create a form of eco-tourism that would also provide ongoing opportunities for the workers who cut away the vegetation and who have learnt sophisticated mountaineering skills.

Working for Water also wanted to set an example in the eco-tourism business by minimising the impact on the environment. In their mountain camps, for example, they fly out all "grey" water used for washing, as well as all the sewage collected in chemical toilets. They have also made paths to minimise trampling of the vegetation.

Mr Lamb said the scenic splendour of rural areas had long been overlooked as a potential source of enjoyment and sustainable income.

On the safety side, the project has access to helicopters that could evacuate tourists in the event of a fire.

Although a price has not been set, Mr Lamb said they were looking at a figure between R600 and R1 300 for a weekend from Friday to Monday.

They have started doing "dummy runs", some with school children from nearby Ceres.

Fired directors rehired

By Justin Arenstein

Nelspruit – Ten sacked Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) directors were reinstated yesterday after threatening to sue the provincial government for R10-million.

The directors were fired along with 290 other staff in May following a crackdown on ghost workers and irregularly appointed staff in the cash-strapped parastatal and Mpumalanga's Environmental Affairs Department.

A Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) hearing on Friday found, however, that all 10 directors had been properly appointed on five-year contracts and had been dismissed unfairly.

Ronny Selekane, a spokesperson for the group, said yesterday that the MPB's suspended chief executive, Alan Gray had dismissed the directors despite documentary proof that they were properly appointed.

"The MPB then unilaterally fired us and paid us three months' salary as a severance package," said Selekane. "It was all rather bizarre. We were all young, well-qualified black guys, but we seem to have been targeted for dismissal for some type of political purposes."

Selekane, who was an assistant director in the parastatal's public relations directorate, confirmed that the group of directors were still negotiating the exact terms of their reinstatement.

Neither MPB acting chief executive Abe Sibiya or his spokesperson were available for comment on the issue.

The other 290 staff were dismissed after the auditor-general and other investigators found they were largely underqualified and had been irregularly appointed by former environmental affairs MEC David Mkhwanazi.

The staff were given a R3,4-million severance settlement and are not affected by the CCMA's ruling on the group of directors.

Mkhwanazi resigned under a cloud of allegations in May and has since been the focus of a series of auditor-general, Heath special investigative and legislature probes into financial irregularities.

He was suspended from the ANC and legislature last month on self-enrichment and maladministration charges. – African Eye News Service

(56) Star 27/10/98

Mpumalanga Parks Board directors reinstated

(76) BD 27/10/98

NELSPRUIT — Ten sacked Mpumalanga Parks Board directors were reinstated yesterday after they threatened to sue the provincial government for R10m.

The directors were dismissed along with 290 other staff in May in a crackdown on ghost workers and irregularly appointed staff in the parastatal and the Mpumalanga environmental affairs department.

A Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration hearing on Friday found, however, that all 10 directors had been properly appointed on five-year contracts and had been unfairly dismissed.

Spokesman for the group, Ronny Selekane, said yesterday that the board's suspended chief executive, Alan Gray, dismissed the directors, despite documentary proof that they were properly appointed.

"We were simply told that we were redundant and no longer needed. The parks board then unilaterally fired us and paid us three months salary as a severance package," Selekane said.

"It was all rather bizarre. I mean we're all young, well-qualified black guys, but seem to have been targeted for dismissal for some type of political purpose."

Selekane, who was an assistant director in the parastatals public relations directorate, confirmed that the group of directors were still negotiating their exact terms of re-instatement with the parks board.

Neither the board's acting chief executive, Abe Sibiya, or his spokesmen were available for comment on the issue.

The other 290 staff were dismissed after the auditor-general and other investigators found that they were largely under-qualified and had been irregularly appointed by former environmental affairs MEC David Mkhwanazi.

The staff were given a R3,4m severance settlement and were not affected by the ruling on the group of directors.

Mkhwanazi resigned under a cloud of nepotism, corruption and mismanagement allegations in May and has since been the focus of a series of investigations by the auditor-general, the Heath special investigating unit and the provincial legislature.

He was suspended from the African National Congress and legislature in September on self-enrichment and maladministration charges. — AENS.

Fired parks officials get their jobs back

(56)

Sowetan 27/10/98

TEN senior Mpumalanga Parks Board staff members, who had been sacked, were reinstated yesterday after a ruling by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration last week that their dismissal had been unfair.

The 10 – who held positions varying from assistant director to director – were fired along with 290 other staff members in May during a crackdown on ghost workers and irregularly appointed staff at the cash-strapped parastatal and Mpumalanga's environmental affairs department.

But a CCMA hearing on Friday found that all 10 had been properly appointed on five-year contracts and had been unfairly dismissed.

The 10 earlier threatened to sue the provincial government for R10 million.

Speaking on behalf of the 10, former MPB public relations directorate assistant director Mr Ronny Selekane said the suspended chief executive of the MPB, Mr Alan Gray, had dismissed them despite documented proof that they were properly appointed.

"We were simply told that we were redundant and no longer needed. The MPB then unilaterally fired us and paid us three months' salary as a severance package," Selekane said.

"It was all rather bizarre. I mean we were all young, well-qualified black guys but seem to have been targeted for dismissal for some type of political purpose."

Selekane said the directors were still negotiating the exact terms of their reinstatement with the MPB.

MPB acting chief executive Abe Sibiya was not available for comment yesterday.

The other 290 staff members were dismissed after the auditor-general and other investigators found they were largely under-qualified and had been appointed irregularly by former environmental affairs MEC Mr David Mkhwanazi.

The 290 were given a total of R3,4 million in severance settlements. Their situation was not affected by Friday's CCMA ruling.

Mkhwanazi resigned in May under a cloud of nepotism, corruption and mismanagement allegations. – *Sapa.*

Medical waste dumping sparks panic

Star 28/10/98 (56)

By Judith Soal

Cape Town – Mitchells Plain is a community in panic after 20 bags of waste, which include bloodied gloves, needles and bandages, were found dumped on Monday

Rumours of sick and dying children are spreading rapidly, although none could be verified. Parents are sending their children for HIV tests.

Local authorities and health officials said yesterday there was no need to panic.

The likelihood that children who played with medical waste will contract HIV or any other disease, including hepatitis B, is negligible, they said.

But "negligible" isn't enough for parents living near the dumping site.

"Our kids were playing in that muck. It should never have happened," said Susan Keet. She had come with her daughter and grandson to the Mitchells Plain day hospital to join the queue for counselling before young Alex had a test for HIV.

The clinic ran counselling sessions yesterday. More than 200 children were brought in on Monday night after the waste was found. About 60 had been on the site and 15 "had needle pricks or scratches".

University of Cape Town virologist Diana Hardie said that although it was impossible to say there was no risk at all, the risks were "pretty negligible".

"In a hospital situation, if a health worker pricks his or her finger with a needle that has been used to take blood from an HIV-positive patient, the chances of that person getting HIV are 0,3%. And that's fresh blood," said Hardie.

"Both HIV and hepatitis B – the two diseases that we should worry about – don't survive for very long outside the body."

HIV was unlikely to live for more than a few hours outside its host. Most medical waste was kept for days before being removed in bulk.

Rob Mortell, chief medical officer at the hospital, said there was an extremely low risk of infection. "There have been no cases of illness or even allergy directly relating to the waste. Lots of parents are understandably reading disease into every cough."

Reporters in the area yesterday were soon surrounded by outraged residents. "How can they just come and dump this here, in a residential area?" asked Fouzia Julies.

Residents spoke of amputated fingers and aborted foetuses being found in the waste – probably a product of the rumours that are bound to fly in such circumstances.

Everyone knew someone who knew someone whose child was ill, but none of these children could be found. But everyone wanted to know one thing: Who is responsible?

Markus Jonker of Mitchells Plain police station said there were two leads. "One is the Lansdowne doctor's name on an envelope found at the scene. The other is that the driver of a waste disposal truck just dumped it."

Gray's CV missing from Mpumalanga govt records

(56) BD 28/10/98

NELSPRUIT — All copies of curriculum vitae for Mpumalanga's suspended parks board chief, Alan Gray, have disappeared from government records, officials said yesterday.

The missing CV is the latest in a string of missing records linked to six illegal promissory notes totalling more than R1,3bn, Gray's business interests and an empowerment business network he set up in 1996.

Officials were also refusing to release copies of remaining relevant documents, with the heads of the Mpumalanga Parks Board, tender board and finance department all insisting they have constitutional rights to privacy that override the public's right to access government information.

The Human Rights Commission cited the parks board two weeks ago for violating the public's fundamental right to government information, and will be meeting the parastatal's attorneys tomorrow.

Commission legal head Mogam Moodlier warned that the parastatal would be investigated for human rights violations unless it agreed at the meeting to release information.

Officials have confirmed that Gray's CV was submitted when he was first appointed as chief executive in 1995.

Mpumalanga's environmental affairs MEC Fish Mahlalela said he inherited a rudimentary filing system on assuming office in May and had only a copy of Gray's letter of appointment.

The parks board's acting executive, Abe Sibiya, again refused to release proof yesterday that the board conducted due diligence tests on financial brokers before irregularly using the province's game parks to issue the six promissory notes. — AENS.

Oudekraal 'deal' on the cards

ANDREA WEISS
POLITICAL REPORTER

(56) ARG 28/10/98

Provincial Environment Minister Kobus Meiring says environmental impact studies will be done on the controversial Oudekraal land, and that cultural sensitivities will be taken into account if any deal is made with owner Kasper Wiehahn.

Mr Meiring said in a provincial debate yesterday that he believed the best course of action would be to reach an agreement so that 90% of the land could be preserved for conservation purposes

Mr Meiring said there were several principles that had to be taken into account.

These were that as much land as possible should be preserved for future generations, but that property rights had to be respected.

And that if the Government wanted to procure land for conservation it would have to rely on donations or expropriation – an option that was unaffordable, which meant agreements would have to be reached.

Mr Meiring said striking a deal on Oudekraal would not be setting a precedent, as this had happened with land at Sandy Bay.

Rob McGregor of the African National Congress said his party had concluded that the R2-billion offer for housing did not exist because it depended on the sale of 1 000 erven to the "super rich" and commercial development rights.

He said the ANC was concerned about the poor, the need for housing, cultural beliefs and the protection of the natural environment, which was why it had taken the initiative to call a meeting with Mr Wiehahn.

The development of Oudekraal was not a way of raising funds for housing.

■ The legislature also heard yesterday that 106 ambulance staff had left the service this year, 78 from Cape Town Municipality, 18 from the Cape Metropolitan Council and 10 from rural councils.

Health Minister Peter Marais said the resignations would not result in a crisis, but Daniel Silke of the Democratic Party cited two examples of poor ambulance service last weekend: a man, who had had a heart attack died waiting for an ambulance, while a woman with a ruptured ectopic pregnancy was stranded for six hours.

'Law on waste disposal the problem'

Some councils do not have strict control regulations

(56) ARG 29/10/98

JENNY VIALL
HEALTH REPORTER

Every month, 180 tons of medical waste are incinerated by Cape Town's largest medical waste disposal company which serves most hospitals and doctors in the Western Cape.

But not all local authorities have by-laws governing the disposal of needles, scalpels and blades.

This week, about 200 children were exposed to high-risk medical waste, including bloody syringes, dumped in a field in Tafelsig. More than 40 of the children were tested for HIV and hepatitis after pricking themselves with the needles.

Ken Bromfield, managing director of Enviroserve which processes medical waste, said his company provided all clients with two types of containers for waste products. A plastic box was used for "sharps" like needles, blades and scalpels. This had a special lid and objects dropped into it could not be removed, preventing their re-use. A cardboard box, lined with plastic, was used for swabs, bandages and body tissues. Every box was barcoded before being issued so it could be traced. Once the box was full, it was sealed, collected and taken to the Vissershok waste incinerator complex.

At busy centres like hospitals, waste was collected a few times a day. At places where less waste was generated, it was collected on request. At Vissershok the waste was weighed, measured for radioactivity and burnt at 1 100 deg C, which was necessary to destroy the waste and prevent it forming dioxins which could be carcinogenic.

The law was the problem, said Mr Bromfield. Human tissue had to be burnt, there was no law compelling people to dispose of "sharps" safely.

Mr Bromfield said: "Enforcement is pathetic. There are unfortunately clinics and private practices which ... send their waste into the general municipal waste stream."

Task team poised to probe dumping of used syringes

STAFF REPORTER

Provincial Health Minister Peter Marais has set up a task team to investigate the dumping of medical waste in Mitchell's Plain and track down everyone who had contact with the high-risk material.

More than 40 children were tested for HIV and hepatitis after they were found playing with bloody syringes which spilled out of 20 bags dumped in a field in Tafelsig this week. More than 200 children are believed to have been exposed to the material.

Those responsible for dumping the waste have yet to be tracked down.

The bags were apparently torn open by dogs, exposing the contents to the curious children. The field is used as a general dump.

Mr Marais said everything possible would be done to ensure the children got proper medical treatment.

Yesterday, provincial legislature member Theresa Solomon and two ANC members of Parliament visited the field in Stella Road.

The ANC's Mitchell's Plain constituency office said the "reckless manner in which black bags of medical waste were left at the side of the road is evidence of a complete disregard for public health and safety".

"This disregard for public health and safety must not be allowed to go unpunished and the ANC will do all it can to find out which party or parties are responsible and ensure that they are brought to book."

Attention needed to be drawn to waste dumping in poor communities, it said.

ANALYSIS

Environmental boss warms to hot seat

BD 30/10/98 (56)

Patrick FitzGerald, the new director-general of environmental affairs and tourism, has had a varied past and faces a challenging future, writes Josey Ballenger

FEW would envy the enormous tasks facing Patrick FitzGerald.

Fresh in the hot seat as director-general of the environmental affairs and tourism department, FitzGerald is mandated with transforming the department and leading it into an era of unprecedented strength.

He is arriving at a time when the department is gearing up to shed its "Cinderella" image and become a real custodian of environmental information — and lead government's prioritisation of tourism as a major driving force of the economy.

Yet FitzGerald is a "man with a plan", and considers the department to be undervalued, rather than being seen as "the economic department" he believes it really is.

Through his academic glasses (he was the director of Wits University's graduate school of public and development management from 1990-94), FitzGerald says the department has been undervalued and is in need of a "relaunch" and marketing campaign.

"This department is not (only) protecting and conserving nature, but is doing things in the economy and development. We are primarily an economic department," he says. The same situation exists with tourism although, he says, he realises that "in the past, people might have thought tourism was just tacked on".

With the weight of the broader government behind him, he is determined to change those perceptions. Whether or not he envisages a fanfare-filled relaunch, it is clear he sees a greater role for both tourism and environmental management — and insists the two go hand in hand.

"If we don't develop various aspects of the environment, there will be nothing left to conserve. Whereas if we see our resources as commercially exploitable and organise sustainable tourism, we can synergise," he says.

Jay Singh, head of the department's communications, says the department will likely see roughly the same budget for environmental matters but allocated an increased amount for tourism in coming years.

FitzGerald stresses the department intends to forge partnerships with the private sector, to beef up tourism, the "fastest-growing industry in the post-industrial world" — a move which would generate millions of rands. Greater clarity is expected to arise from Friday's presidential job summit, but in the meantime the department has been busy making linkages with business "like never before".

The environmental affairs and tourism department's new director-general, Patrick FitzGerald. Picture: JOSEY BALLENGER

On environmental management, FitzGerald is well aware the department is faced with putting into effect the National Environmental Management Bill. Currently before the National Council of Provinces, this bill aims to consolidate and expand on SA's long-criticised, fragmented legislation.

Towards that end and as part of the department's restructuring process, FitzGerald foresees the addition of an environmental information services directorate which will give the department "real power and influence". It will enable the department to give advice on issues such as tourism, waste management, ecosystems and the like.

He says the Committee for Environmental Co-ordination and the National Environmental Advisory Forum, laid out in the bill, will be the key points of "tightening" co-ordination between various government departments and tiers and civil society.

Yet he points out that it will continue to be provincial and local authorities' — and, in some cases, other departments' — responsibility to monitor the environment at ground level.

Although FitzGerald is not well known in environmental circles, he receives high marks from those who worked with him, or heard of his record, in provincial government. Even so, several have expressed their surprise that a white man was appointed even though the position was open for more than a year.

The 44-year-old former Gauteng Provincial Service Commission chairman (1994-98) has his "struggle credentials", however, having been administrative head of the African National Congress's arts, sport and culture department in Lusaka from 1984 to 1989, barring a break in between to get a master's degree in public administration in the UK.

FitzGerald is also no stranger to transformation, an area of expertise which probably appealed to minister Pallo Jordan and the selection committee. In 1994, FitzGerald led the former Gauteng premier's strategic management team, and last year he facilitated the transformation process in none other than President Nelson Mandela's office, among other institutions.

FitzGerald says he started transforming his department the day he took office in September, and will be finished by January.

Quentin Espey, director of the Group for Environmental Monitoring, says: "He's supposed to be a very good bureaucrat and manager. I'm somewhat surprised (Jordan) has appointed a white male and someone I've never heard of. Yet I think he's been brought in to sort out cost-effectiveness and transformation."

Water affairs and forestry director-general Mike Muller says: "FitzGerald has the right background of (showing) how government can function and intervene in an area as subtle and sensitive as the environment. You need someone who has the right approach."

Ilva Mackay Langa, head of the office of the Gauteng Provincial Service Commission, says FitzGerald has incredible strengths. "The primary thing is he has a very clear understanding of the public service and what we should be moving towards." She credits him with achieving a more fair representation of women and black managers throughout the provincial government.

Bobby Peek, community campaigns co-ordinator for the Environmental Justice Networking Forum, probably sums up the view of many environmentalists when he says: "I don't know anything about him, (but) it is good to see new faces in the department. Hopefully he will move in a more positive direction and jack up the department."

ANC silence on shady network

(56) M+G 30/10-5/11/98

Justin Arenstein

Mpumalanga's government battened down the hatches this week and refused to release any information about its dealings with a shadowy business network reported to be channelling funds into the African National Congress's 1999 election coffers.

The network was reportedly set up in 1996 under the control of three holding companies and relied heavily on government tenders and other contracts to generate funds for its estimated 27 affiliate companies. Neither the provincial government nor the ANC would officially comment on the network this week in a marked departure from the Mpumalanga ANC's usual fiery response to any charges of shady deals.

The clampdown comes despite orders for disclosure by the provincial government's Director General, Frank Mbatha, and warnings by the Human Rights Commission that the public's rights of access to information had been violated.

Commission legal head Mogam Moodlier met with Mpumalanga Parks Board lawyers on October 29 in an attempt to convince them to release financial records and other information on the issue. There was still no resolution to the dispute by the time the *Mail & Guardian* went to press but Moodlier has warned that the parastatal will be investigated in terms of the Human Rights Commission Act unless it complies with requests for information.

Mpumalanga's new MEC for Finance, Lassy Chiwayo, and key officials in his department also defied written instructions to disclose the network's links to the government this week. Mbatha wrote two strongly worded letters to Chiwayo and three of the most senior financial directors ordering them to answer the *M&G*'s questions in writing by October 28. Not one bothered to reply or return phone calls on the issue.

Chiwayo, his office said, was attending ANC Youth League and provincial working committee meetings during normal office hours and was consistently unavailable for comment. Mpumalanga Finance Corporation CEO and acting finance department head Sam Cronje simply ignored Mbatha's letters.

Cronje helped set up at least one of the holding companies in the network; while his wife, Marika, is a director of the network's most profitable subsidiary, Phakamani Security Services. Phakamani is 50% owned by Pfunanani Holdings and holds the bulk of the Mpumalanga government's security service contracts. Cronje has also admitted that he bought into at least one of the network's top-secret helicopter partnerships with the recently ousted finance and environmental affairs MECs, Jacques Modiparie and David Mkhwanazi, and South Africa's ambassador to Mozambique, Mangisi Zitha. The partnership was designed and initiated by suspended parks board CEO Alan Gray in 1996.

Gray claims in a highly confidential 43-page report to Mpumalanga's executive council that the partnership was supposed to serve as a pilot project for the network to build a black aviation company. The company would rely on guaranteed amounts of government contracts.

He warns that the entire network and its financial kickbacks to the ANC would be exposed unless the executive intervened and mitigated charges of maladministration and fraud currently being investigated against him by Judge Willem Heath. The charges stem from Gray's illegal use of Mpumalanga's game parks as collateral for six secret promissory notes he issued to dodgy financial brokers in return for offshore loans worth more than R1,3-billion.

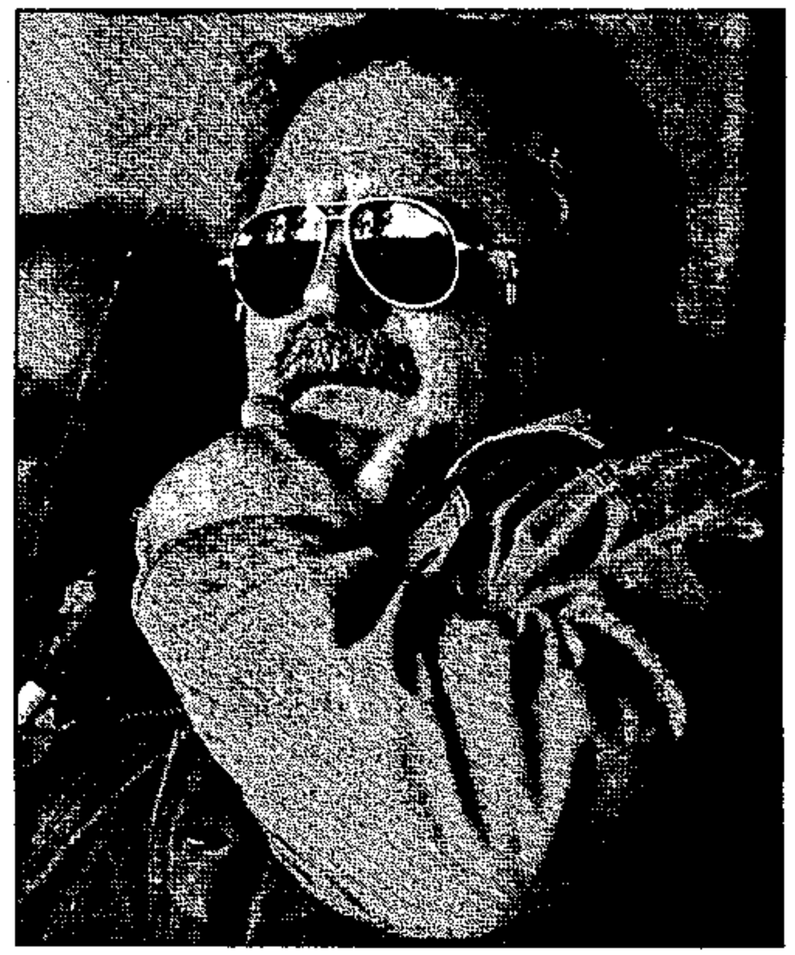
Gray's report, dated September 23, was never presented to the executive council but has since been handed to the ANC's top national leadership for further investigation. ANC Mpumalanga representative Jackson Mthembu said this week that he had been requested not to comment until the national leadership made a decision.

Mpumalanga's tender board head, Hamlet Mona, meanwhile also refused to confirm the extent of the network's dealings with the province or links with a list of 19 key network shareholders. Mona dismissed two letters from Mbatha ordering his full co-operation as irrelevant and refused to say how much money had been paid to network affiliated companies.

"I will not accept ultimatums from anyone and will not answer your questions. I don't care whether I am constitutionally bound to do so — I'm not putting myself at risk," said Mona. He refused to take further calls on the issue.

Other questions which Mona, Cronje and provincial treasury head Issy Lief refused to answer include exactly who was paid R13,8-million by the parks board for 10 properties bought irregularly in 1996 and 1997. The cash-strapped parastatal bought the properties, including two hotels, without tender board approval and rented them to the provincial government for R1 each a year. The auditor general described the expenditure as "inexplicable" and a complete waste of tax money in a special audit report in July.

Meanwhile, sources in the parks board indicate that all records relating to another network company, Somalanga, have been purged from the parastatal's computer system. Somalanga was appointed by Gray to develop the province's flagship game reserve at Songimvelo. It is a subsidiary of another of the network's three holding companies, the Corridor Development Corporation (CDC), and is linked to Gray's "good friend" and business partner, Sean McMurray.



Top secret: Alan Gray's report on the network was never presented to the provincial executive council

McMurray was a parks board board member for a brief while in 1996. He has since leased his house to the parks board as offices in Middelburg and sold 50% of his hotel's interests in Pilgrim's Rest and Nelspruit to the Dubai-based Dolphin Group. He helped introduce Dolphin to Mpumalanga and played a prominent role in setting up the secret R12,5-billion deal in 1996 that tried to grant Dolphin a 50-year commercial development monopoly on the province's game reserves. McMurray is currently a director of the CDC and has declined to deny his membership of the network or comment on its activities.

Mbatha was unavailable for comment at the time of going to press. — African Eye News Service

Managing elephants and other animals

(56) M&G 30/10-5/11/98

Sharon Hammond

The Kruger National Park will present its much-awaited proposal for a new policy on managing its elephant population on Saturday. This follows decades of highly emotional criticism for culling the animals in an effort to keep the population in the park at a fixed number of between 7 000 and 7 500.

"We acknowledge that the policies of the preceding three decades were too rigid and inflexible," explains the general manager of conservation and development in the park, Dr Leo Braack. He adds, however, that previous policies were appropriate at the time, based on the best information available then.

The new elephant management plan will not totally exclude culling. Braack explains that culling will continue, but only in two of six huge proposed zones covering the park. Culling will also not be the only option in these two zones, called low-impact zones, as the elephant populations here will further be controlled through live capture.

"Contraception is also a future possibility," adds Braack. In two other zones, marked as "high-impact", elephant numbers won't be controlled at all for several decades, while the two remaining zones in the north of the park will be off-limits to elephants to preserve rare and endangered plants in the area.

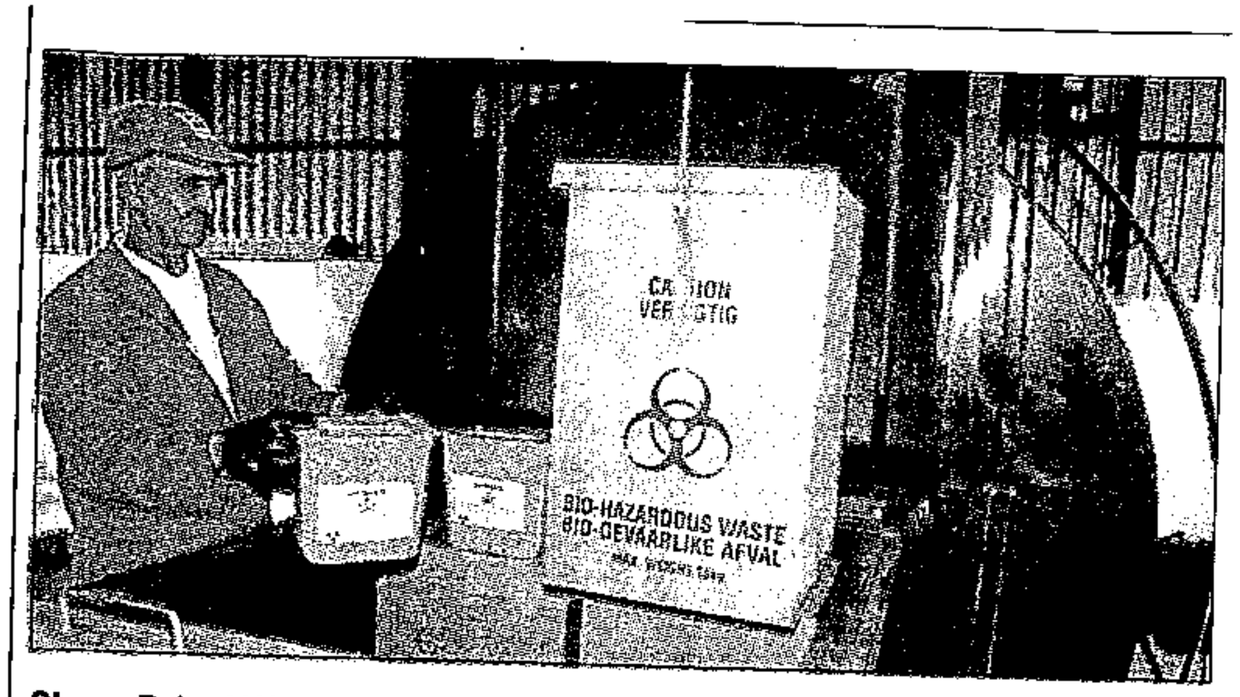
The zoning system, says Braack, will allow fluxes in the elephant population and thereby ensure a richer biodiversity in the park than under the previous elephant management policy. "Some areas will be opened up by high elephant numbers knocking down trees and thus promoting grassland and herds of zebra, wildebeest and others," he says. "Other areas will become woodland due to low elephant numbers and this benefits many species of birds, reptiles and a host of other groups."

If elephant numbers are not regulated at all, Braack warns, their destruction of plant life can wipe out entire habitats in the park, leading to the extinction of both the plants and other animals that survive on them. Although elephant numbers in the two proposed high-impact zones won't be regulated, their impact in those areas will be monitored using a system called Thresholds for Potential Concern (TPC).

"Once a TPC has been reached and investigation shows we cannot allow further change to occur without incurring loss of some component of biodiversity, then the high-impact and low-impact zones will be switched," explains Braack.

This will allow the high-impact zone to recover as the smaller elephant population from the low-impact zone is moved to the area, and the larger, uncontrolled group is taken to the low-impact zone.

"These switches will probably need to occur at anything between 30-year and 100-year intervals," says Braack. He says the proposed policy was more realistic than the "hands-off" approach called for by activists. "The park is for all species, not just elephants." — African Eye News Service



Clean: Robert Wagner at work on the new medical incinerator at Vissershok

Quarter of medical waste dumped, says expert

ARG 1/12/98 (56)

JOYFUL MLAMLI MANELI
STAFF REPORTER

Up to a quarter of the average 2 000 tons of medical waste produced in South Africa a month is disposed of illegally, according to a survey.

The survey was done by a company called Enviroserv Holdings Limited, whose managing director, Ken Bromfield, said research indicated this waste was going into the environment.

Speaking at the launch of a R2-million medical waste incinerator in Vissershok yesterday, Mr Bromfield said: "Such waste includes human body parts, Hepatitis B and HIV-contaminated syringes and needles, blood, swabs and other potentially infectious material."

Provincial Health Minister Peter Marais said he was weighing new legislation that would regulate the disposal of medical waste in the Western Cape to prevent people from unwittingly contracting diseases such as HIV.

A team headed by the chief director of health had been appointed to report on cases of dumping of medical waste, after incidents in Mitchell's Plain, Grassy Park and Elsies River.

The new legislation would ensure that medical practitioners had valid contracts with companies such as Enviroserv.

Mr Bromfield said his company had launched the incinerator as a commercial venture to help avoid disease risks. "Medical waste in this country is dumped illegally and this high-temperature incinerator will dispose of waste at a very low cost."

The Vissershok medical waste incinerator is described as one of the most efficient and hi-tech systems developed in South Africa to date. It will be able to handle 350kg of waste an hour or about 140 tons a month.

"The incinerator contains a continuous water-borne deashing system, which prevents ash emissions getting into the atmosphere," Mr Bromfield said.

CT 1/12/98

Focus falls on marine resources

(56)

BUREAUCRATS OUT: Peter Mokaba

DELEGATES from about 30 African countries south of the Sahara, donor nations and international agencies are meeting in the city to discuss proposals that could lead to a new era in protection for the coastal and marine resources.

Their week-long conference is expected to give new life to two conventions on environmental protection and to approve the formation of a regional commission on sustainable development. The meeting, organised by non-government organisation the Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea (ACOPS), is also expected to take a hard look at aid programmes.

Deputy Minister Environmental Affairs and Tourism Peter Mokaba, who is a vice-president of ACOPS, told the opening session yesterday morning that international aid for Africa had brought a proliferation of "international bureaucrats".

Donors determined what programmes should be set up with their cash. Programmes were duplicated and there was a tendency to establish duplicate structures and bureaucracies. All this "absorbs even higher percentages of this assistance and denies well-deserving projects ... the necessary resources", Mokaba said.

The first three days of the conference are to focus on technical discussions. On Thursday and Friday, ministers from the countries are to meet to give their stamp of approval to the conference's proposals.

ACOPS hopes to remedy what it says is the "almost non-existent" co-operation in marine affairs in sub-Saharan Africa and to encourage governments to give proper political backing to the Abidjan and Nairobi conventions on the protection of coastal and marine zones.

ACOPS executive director Viktor Sebek said yesterday that the conventions were virtually inoperational. Most African counties did not pay their voting contributions, because, politically, the environment was not a priority.

"The important point we wish to make is that ... environmental protection is not a luxury but an economic prerequisite of sustainable development," Sebek said.

"We believe that we can mobilise support of African political leaders if (they can) see such measures as promoting their economic development." — Sapa

20% of medics 'are breaking dumping laws'

CT 1/12/98

UP to 25% of medical waste produced in South Africa each month is disposed of illegally, according to Ken Bromfield, managing director of waste management company EnviroServe. (56)

Speaking at the launch of the Western Cape's new regional medical waste incinerator at Vissershok, he said about 20% of doctors, dentists and industrial clinics in the province disposed of medical waste in ways that were illegal.

It was estimated that in the Eastern Cape, 25% to 30% of all medical waste, including that from state and private hospitals, was disposed of illegally, Bromfield said.

"Although it is difficult to get official statistics, our market research indicates that up to 25%, or 500 tons, of all medical waste produced in South Africa each month is going illegally into the environment," he said.

"Such waste includes human body parts, Hepatitis B and HIV-contaminated syringes and needles, blood, swabs and other potentially infectious material."

Bromfield described illegal dumping as a "potential time bomb for the health of South Africa's people".

The Vissershok medical incinerator was opened officially by the Western Cape's MEC for Health and Social Services, Peter Marais.

The incinerator has the capacity to handle 350kg of waste an hour or about 140 tons each month.

The facility cost R2 million. — Sapa

Pollution payout for communities likely

(56) Star 1/12/98

Iscor faces choice of buying out properties or rehabilitating the affected areas where residents have endured health problems and loss of property values

By Melanie-Ann Feris
Environment Reporter

Communities around the Iscor works in Vanderbijlpark will have to be compensated millions of rands for continuous pollution that has caused serious health problems and residents' property values to drop.

The total cost of compensating the communities is expected to amount to some R90-million.

Iscor has made no decision on whether to buy out the land from the communities. The company has been blamed by several sources as one of the polluters.

A cost benefit analysis (CBA) done recently to determine a solution to the communities' problems, suggests that regardless of whether the buy-out option or a remedial option is chosen, rehabilitation of the groundwater, soil and ecology needs to be done.

Residents would also have to be compensated for past damages: the health problems and agricultural losses due to pollution.

The communities of Drakeville, Steel Valley, Louisrus, Rietkuil and Linkholm have for years been complaining that ongoing pollution has affected their health, has caused their land to become less productive and their property values to drop.

Studies done in the area, have shown that almost the entire area has been polluted (groundwater and soil), and that without the necessary remedial steps the area would remain unsuitable for human habitation.

Studies show both ground water, soil affected

The CBA has been done to determine the costs of buying out the land or whether it would be cheaper to provide much needed services like sewerage and water.

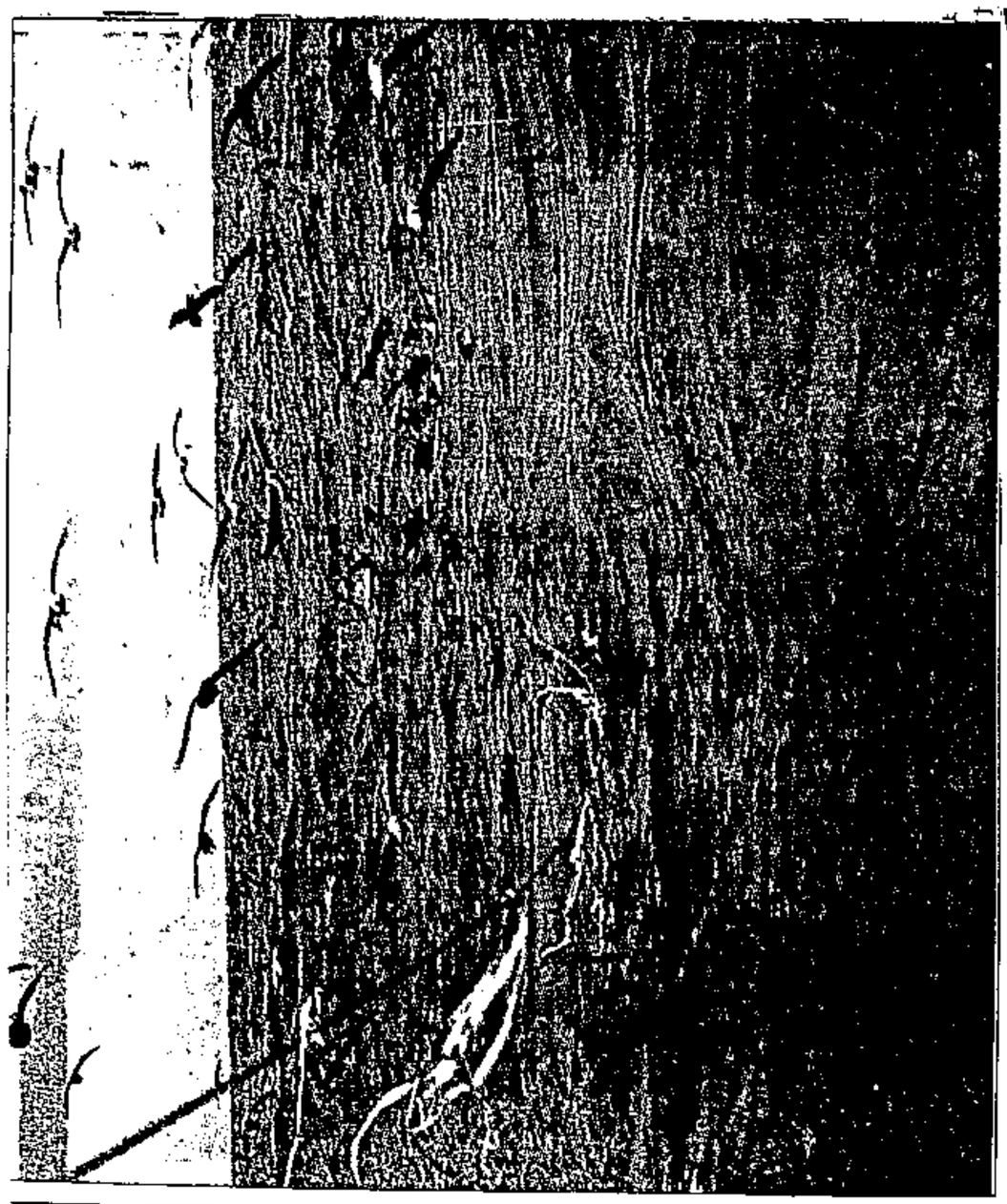
Carol Ferguson, division manager for Iscor's public relations office, said they were still studying the report but indications were that the costs of buying out the land and the cost of implementing remedial actions including the introduction of services such as sewerage and water, would be almost the same.

According to the CBA the overall cost for buying out the almost 300 properties in the area would amount to R55-million, while the cost for rehabilitation could amount to R63-million.

Although the CBA was not done to determine who caused the pollution problems, it does show that there are different kinds of pollution in the communities.

This includes pollution of ground water through seepage from the Iscor works including seepage from the company's unlined effluent canal.

Bacterial pollution has also been caused by the residents' french drains and septic tanks.



JIM ENTICOTT

Scarecrow: streamers attached to fishing long-lines help to keep scavenging seabirds at bay

SA has key role in world move to save seabirds

(56)

ARG 2/12/98

Long-line fishing targeted

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

South Africa is at the forefront of new efforts to save hundreds of thousands of seabirds – particularly albatrosses and petrels – that drown each year after being hooked during long-lining fishing operations.

Long-lining involves the setting of tens of thousands of baited hooks at a time.

The birds are caught when they scavenge the bait as the hooks are deployed over the stern of the fishing vessel.

The hooked birds drown as the line – which can be several kilometres long – sinks beneath the surface.

At a specially convened consultation in Rome earlier this year, held under the auspices of the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organisation, a comprehensive international action plan was developed to reduce incidental catches of seabirds during this type of fishing which is practised around the world.

If formally approved by the FAO's Committee on Fisheries at its next meeting in February, signatory nations – including South Africa – will be expected to implement individualised national action plans, based on this master plan, by 2001.

University of Cape Town marine ornithologist John Cooper was one of the delegates at the FAO's Consultation on Seabirds in Rome.

It developed and approved what is technically known as the "International Plan of Action to Reduce the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Long-line Fisheries".

Mr Cooper is co-ordinator of the seabird conservation programme of BirdLife International, the world's largest non-governmental organisation concerned with bird conservation.

He attended the consultation as an accredited observer for both BirdLife International and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, of which South Africa is a founder signatory.

Mr Cooper was closely involved in drafting the plan in co-operation with delegates from Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States.

"The adopted document emphasises the voluntary nature of the action plan, and also states that the list of mitigation measures is neither mandatory nor exhaustive," Mr Cooper told the Cape Argus.

"Concern was also expressed over including a time-frame for action, but eventually there was agreement that states should start implementing their national plans by no later than the 2001 meeting of the FAO's Committee on Fisheries."

The plan applies to the high seas as well as to coastal waters under states' jurisdictions, Mr Cooper said.

South African fishermen catch seabirds during long-line fishing for Patagonian toothfish in the Southern Ocean, and for hake off the South African coast.

In the southern hemisphere, long-lining operations for tuna, swordfish and billfish also cause major seabird mortalities.

The species of seabirds most frequently taken are albatrosses and petrels.

According to the Rome document, national action plans should prescribe appropriate mitigation methods.

"These should have a proven efficiency, and be cost-effective for the fishing industry," it states.

The national plans should also contain provision for research and development, such as developing the most practical and effective seabird deterrent devices, and improving other technologies and practices which reduce their capture.

States should do specific research to evaluate the effectiveness of measures to prevent bird problems in long-line fisheries.

Cape conservation bill is passed

ENVIRONMENT WRITER (56) CT 21/2/98

THE Western Cape Nature Conservation Board Bill was passed in the provincial legislature yesterday, paving the way for the Cape Nature Conservation department to become a statutory board.

Acting director of Cape Nature Conservation Kas Hamman said he was "ecstatic" about the legislation, adding that it would have major implications for conservation in the province.

He said a nature conservation board would be able to generate its own income and use it for conservation management. Under existing legislation that was not possible as all income generated from the nature reserves went into the general provincial coffers.

"Now nature reserve staff will have the incentive to generate funds, because the money will be coming back to conservation.

"Having a board also means that joint initiatives could be set up with the private sector to get capital funding, which the government does not have. It also means a fund can be established which can accumulate donations and bequests. Fund-raising drives can be set up, also drawing on the overseas market," Hamman said.

The type of joint initiative could involve the private sector building and running a lodge in one of the reserves.

He said the board would be made up of four experts in nature conservation, and the remaining five would represent the broader community.

Once the board was in place, it would appoint the chief executive officer.

The board would take care of the province's green issues, and a new provincial department of environment affairs would be established to deal with issues like development control, impact assessments and pollution control.

No returns on SA's 'green' money

SA companies would respond better to tax breaks on investment in environmental issues than to legislation, writes Grant Hatch

(56) BD 2/12/98

A RECENT survey of 1 000 SA companies revealed that investment in environmental performance by SA companies had increased costs, from procurement to distribution, but failed to generate increased profitability.

This is the primary reason why SA companies are reluctant to exceed regulatory requirements.

However, companies should see environment investment as a direct savings opportunity. A recent Gemini Consulting strategic analysis revealed that a 0,5 percentage point reduction in production wastage by a large manufacturer would lead to an annualised saving of R5,6m.

The key issue is implementing a measurement system that captures performance improvements of environmental investment.

Companies tend to rely heavily on the financial assessment of performance improvement yet many of the sources of environment improvement are difficult to quantify. Implementing a broader management focus that assesses both financial and non-financial measurements will provide a more comprehensive and accurate view of improvement.

The survey, conducted by Gemini Consulting, the CSIR and Janine Everson and Jonathan Foster-Pedley of the Graduate School of Business at the University of Cape Town, probed the influence of environmental issues on business strategy and covered a range of companies from chemical producers to service companies of varied size.

The survey also showed that environmental issues were considered of the lowest importance relative to other issues — which ranged from union and affirmative action to globalisation. Customers, profitability, product quality and competitiveness were highest on the list.

Despite the relatively low importance of environmental issues, 35% of respondents had observed the raising of environmental barriers in their industry. These had included legislation, industry standards, safety factors, customer requirements and export requirements.

Also, 76% saw opportunities for environmentally-friendly products or services in SA in the future (up from 47% currently) while 77% saw international opportunities (up from 73% currently).

Despite perceived opportunities for environmentally-friendly products, companies see investment in environment-improving technology as a cost rather than as a cost saving.

The majority of companies were aware of pending environmental legislation. Awareness of draft legislation related to air and water pollution and waste disposal was highest (55%). Yet only 28% had changed operations in response to environmental legislation in the past.

Most companies (70%), would, however, change operations to comply with new legislation but only 30% would improve performance beyond requirements. Significantly, 81% of companies surveyed would prefer tax incentives to regulations to control environmental performance and 44% would make significant operational changes to attract tax benefits. While just over half the companies surveyed (52%) had developed an environmental policy less than half of these companies had published the policy internally and less than a quarter had published the policy externally.

A quarter of companies employed an environmental manager while 31% had implemented an environmental management system and over half intended adopting the ISO 14 000 standard.

The survey seems to indicate that the Environmental Management Bill and Integrated Pollution and Waste Management legislation will drive compliance by business but an incentive-driven approach is more likely to encourage change.

☐ *Hatch is a management consultant with Gemini Consulting*

Kruger Park back in the black

Skukuza – The Kruger National Park had managed to transform itself from being a massive loss-making enterprise to making R14-million profit over the past 10 months, its first black director, David Mabunda, said here.

Stating that the park had been R7,6-million in the red when he assumed his post, Mr Mabunda said in a statement yesterday that the turnaround was full vindication of his transformation policies and new business-based control measures.

Conceding there was still subtle resistance to his leadership in the park, Mr Mabunda said he was also still battling the misplaced belief among black staff that his appointment gave them license to do as they pleased.

"It has not been easy and subliminal racism and other stereotypes are by no means dead. (56)

"But people seem to have put their differences aside and are choosing to work together as a team."

The complete eradication of "free-loaders", who gained free entrance to the park because of their connections, was just one of the innovations which boosted the park's earnings, he said.

Tightened security at all retail and other cash outlets in the park resulted in dramatic revenue increases.

A decision was made to run each of the park's 27 rest camps as a separate business unit with separate budgets managed by the camp staff.

"Customer service is the new buzz word, with even our traffic cops fining people with a smile these days," said Mr Mabunda. – Sapa

ARG 3/12/98

The Star ... Thursday December 3 1998

Kruger Park saved from bankruptcy

(56)

Star 3/12/98

First black director says transformation policies have yielded R14-m profit

By Justin Arenstein
Skukuza

The Kruger National Park has transformed itself from being a massive loss-making enterprise to making a R14-million profit over the past 10 months, its first black director, David Mabunda, said yesterday.

Stressing that the park had a R7,6-million deficit when he assumed his post, Mabunda said the about-turn was vindication of his transformation policies and new business-based control measures.

Conceding that there was still subtle resistance to his leadership in the park by some white staff, Mabunda said he was also battling the misplaced belief among black staff that his appointment gave them licence to do as they pleased.

The eradication of free-loaders, who gained free entrance to the park because of their connections, was just one of the innovations that had boosted the parks earnings.

Security had also been tightened at all retail and other cash outlets in the park, resulting in revenue increases, he said.

Other innovations included the decision to run each of the park's 27 rest camps as a separate business unit with separate budgets managed by the camp staff.

"Staff now know who really pays their salaries – the customer and not the state. Customer service is the new buzzword," said Mabunda.

He was honoured for his leadership by Dr Yvonne Dladla, chairperson of the South African National Parks transformation task group, during the Kruger Park's annual awards ceremony at the weekend.

Mabunda received the green, blue and executive gold awards for various aspects of his policies.

Ranger Alpheus Chauke, of Shimwuni, and ranger Thomas Chauke, of Vlakteplaas, were both cited for bravery after shooting lions that were threatening to maul colleagues. And Albert Maluleke was cited for bravery for shooting and killing the leopard that killed student ranger Charles Swart.

Other awards went to former Kruger park acting warden Frans Laubscher, for his managerial skills; Johannes Stefanus Kruger, for running the best camp in the park at Letaba; and Frank Watts, for implementing the best transformation initiatives at the Shimwuni bush camp.

"We had a great party after the awards ceremonies, with a local deejay spinning kwaito, vastrap, boeremusiek and African rhythms late into the night," said parks spokesperson Luther Masuku. – African Eye News Service

 (56) FM 4/12/98

EXTERMINATING THE ALIENS

The springtime flowering of the *Acacia mearnsii* (black wattle) and the *Melia azedarach* (syringa) are numbered, if the department of water affairs and forestry has its way.

The water-guzzling trees are classified, along with the equally greedy *Opuntia* (prickly pear) and *Solanum mauritianum* (bugweed) and a host of other exotica imported by early settlers, as "invading alien plants".

These undesirables consume about 33,3bn m³ of water a year — that's 26bn bathfuls and nearly as much water used by people and industry in SA's combined urban and industrial centres — says a CSIR report prepared for Water Affairs' Working for Water programme.

More than 10m ha, or 6,8% of SA and Lesotho, are estimated to have been invaded. So far the programme's spent R365m over the past three years eliminating the alien trees from 300 000 ha. The survivors are fighting back and expanding at a rate of 5%/year. It's reckoned the cost of final victory over 20 years could be more than R5bn.

Alien extermination methods, also known as "integrated control", include the chainsaw, herbicides and biological warfare — using fungus or hostile insects to decrease seed production or kill a tree.

Dave Richardson, deputy director at the Institute for Plant Conservation at the University of Cape Town, and an expert on alien plants, says most of the condemned species had arrived in Cape Town's Botanical Gardens by 1850. "The pines were brought in for low quality furniture and building. The acacias — Port Jackson, the rooikrans — were planted to stabilise drift sands."

Richardson explains: "The former Department of Forestry planted rooikrans and the other aliens over thousands of hectares, along the coastline, to hold the soil.

"With the benefit of hindsight, it was a crazy thing to even think about and it's caused many more problems than it's solved. Now, after all this effort and huge expense, the same department is applying millions of rand to clear them out again."

Jack Lundin

TOP 10 INVADERS

Species	Area/ha	Country of origin
Pines	3m	Mediterranean Basin & N Amer
Syringa	3m	Asia
Black wattle	2,5m	Australia
Lantana	2,2m	S America
Rooikrans	1,9m	Australia
Port Jackson	1,9m	Australia
Mesquite	1,8m	N America
Bugweed	1,8m	S America
Prickly pear	1,8m	S America
Hakea s	723 000	Australia

Whale trail early task for new nature board

Boost for W Cape conservation

(56) ARG 4/12/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The development of a five-day "Whale Trail" along the spectacular De Hoop nature reserve coastline near Cape Agulhas is likely to be one of the first projects of the soon-to-be-established Western Cape Nature Conservation Board.

The new trail could prove a serious rival for the world-famous Otter Trail at Tsitsikamma, conservationists are suggesting.

Advertisements calling for nominations for the nine-member statutory board will be placed soon, following this week's passing of the required bill by the Western Cape legislature.

The adoption of the Western Cape Nature Conservation Board Bill paved the way for the province's Cape Nature Conservation department to be transformed into a board.

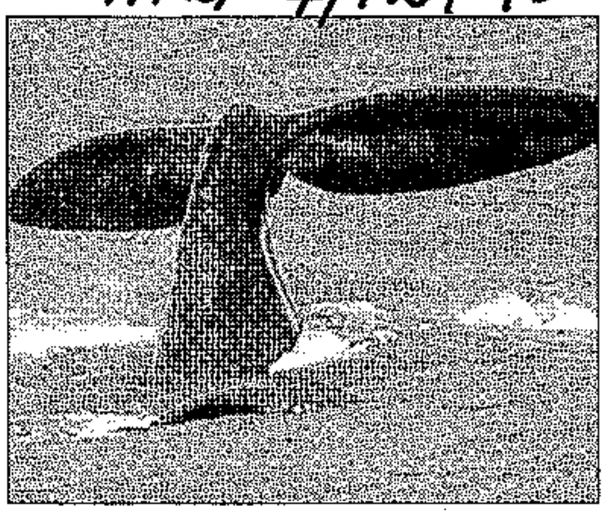
Unlike the conservation department, the board will be allowed to generate its own capital, accept monetary donations and bequests, and enter profit-generating partnerships with private enterprises.

Previously, the conservation department had to operate strictly within its approved budget and all income generated in its reserves had to be returned to the general provincial coffers.

Kas Hamman, the conservation department's acting director, said he was delighted by the move.

"Now money will be coming back directly into conservation, and the staff will have a real incentive to generate funds," he said.

The change would create many opportunities for partnerships between the new board and private enterprise, Dr Hamman added.



Trail for tails: sights like these could be seen from the De Hoop 'Whale Trail'

"There has been a lack of funding for capital developments in our reserves such as trails, huts and lodges, and so we see this as an ideal opportunity now to get the private sector involved in the whole process."

One of the board's first initiatives was likely to be the search for private funding of about R250 000 for a four-night, five-day hiking trail in the De Hoop nature reserve, Dr Hamman said.

"We see that trail as being on a par with the Otter Trail at Tsitsikamma, and it's an ideal opportunity for private sector involvement."

The new board, to be appointed by Western Cape Environment Minister Kobus Meiring, will consist of nine members, four of whom must be acknowledged conservation experts. The other five will represent the broader community.

Dr Hamman said advertisements calling for nominations would be placed shortly.

A shortlist would be considered by the Western Cape legislature's standing committee on the environment, which would make recommendations to the minister.

"As soon as the board is up and running it must appoint a chief executive officer. And once that has happened – which we hope will be within the next six months – the whole process of transferring staff, vehicles and equipment across can start. That will probably take about another six months."

Dr Hamman said most of the conservation department's conservation complement of about 550 would make the move to the new board. But some would be transferred to a new provincial department which was being established to deal with "brown" issues such as pollution, and other environmental concerns such as impact assessments.

The board would be responsible for managing the Western Cape's proclaimed nature reserves, as well as for regulatory control outside these areas – such as hunting and fishing. The question of policing the province's marine resources was "quite contentious", Dr Hamman said.

At present, Cape Nature Conservation had control above the high-water mark, while the national marine inspectorate – which was part of conservation from 1987 to 1995 – was responsible for policing the sea. There was some dispute over the inter-tidal zone.

There was also confusion over the control of estuaries.

"These are issues that will have to be sorted out as quickly as possible," said Dr Hamman.

SA to sign conventions on Africa's marine resources

(56) CT 4/12/98

SOUTH AFRICA is to sign two African conventions aimed at protecting the continent's coastal and marine resources, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki announced yesterday.

He told delegates to a conference on the protection and development of these resources that Parliament would be asked to finalise accession early next year.

The 1981 Abidjan and the 1985 Nairobi conventions have been poorly supported by the countries that have already signed them. One of the aims of this week's conference has been to revitalise them and muster stronger political support for their implementation.

Mbeki said that although coastal and marine areas were probably one of the most valuable economic assets of African countries with coastlines, the pressure on these resources was very high and often led to their degradation.

"There is agreement among us that we need to co-operate among ourselves, as the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the better to be able to meet these common challenges," he said.

"Our own government is ready to contribute in whatever manner necessary ... to ensure that the proposals of this conference reach the decision-making structures of Africa for proper consideration."

Representatives of about 30 African governments at the conference, which ends today, are expected to approve an agreement outlining a new approach to development south of the Sahara.

The agreement will commit signatories to renewed co-operation within the framework of the Abidjan and Nairobi conventions, and set the wheels in motion for establishing a sub-Saharan commission on sustainable development.

It will also commit the signatories to supporting a "partnership conference" involving African countries, donors, NGOs and the private sector in the year 2000, probably in Abidjan.

Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan told the conference Africa had to guard against the unprincipled and unregulated pursuit of private profit by the continent's elite.

The rationale offered for this pursuit was often the highly commendable goal of economic development, but development that resulted in untold violence to the natural environment and the African people was ultimately self-defeating.

Jordan said the continent needed to speak with one voice on environmental issues.

Organisation of African Unity assistant secretary-general Ahmed Hagag said some maintained that marine management had nothing to do with politics. Ideally this should be so, but unfortunately the reality was different.

Hagag said there was continuous plundering of African resources by non-Africans. — Sapa

'Fast-living' sea poachers killing SA marine riches

ARG 5/12/98 ~~(3) FISHING~~ (56)

WILLEM STEENKAMP

There is a new breed of crayfish and perlemoen poacher active on the southern Cape coast – they drive the latest 4x4s and luxury German saloons and are backed by the best lawyers in the business.

These men are destroying South Africa's valuable marine resources.

Understaffed and demotivated Sea Fisheries officials deployed on the coast to stop the rape of our marine resources readily admit they are virtually powerless to stop the well-organised poachers.

They say that even when some of the poachers are apprehended they hire top attorneys and advocates to get them off the hook.

They arrive at court with bundles of money, pay the fines and are back on the coast within hours.

"Not only do these people have access to vast amounts of money, but the lives of the few officials we have available to bring these people to book are at stake every time they act against the poachers," said Kobus Engelbrecht, head of the Sea Fisheries unit in Hermanus.

"Recently, one of our men saw three divers illegally poaching perlemoen near Hermanus. When the official went down to confront the men, about 30 others appeared from the bushes and threatened the official. He had to flee for his life and when he got to his vehicle the tyres had been slashed."

Mr Engelbrecht said officials now rarely acted without the support of the police who were asked to accompany them when officials took action against poachers.

"But this is far from an ideal situation. It must be remembered that the police also are understaffed and battling to contain crime.

'The lives of officials are at stake every time they act against poachers'

"They cannot be expected to help us virtually 24 hours a day in combating poachers.

Mr Engelbrecht said Sea Fisheries suffered from a shortage of money and manpower which limited their actions

"And now, with the new legislation which makes it compulsory for fishermen to have licences, as must divers and people collecting shells, licences to take out bait and the normal crayfish and perlemoen licence requirements, our workload is going to increase even more."

Mr Engelbrecht said certain sections of the coast had now been stripped of perlemoen by poachers. There was simply nothing left.

"When this happens, the poachers simply target another stretch of coast. In certain areas, they are also taking to boats. When they see our boats approaching, they simply dump their catches and race away."

Mr Engelbrecht said he suspected the Chinese triads were behind the organised poaching operations.

"We see them around town and we have seen them arrive at court to pay fines for poachers," he added.

Mr Engelbrecht admitted that Sea Fisheries officials were demotivated and were struggling to keep up their morale against mounting odds.

He said the impact that poachers had already had on perlemoen resources could be seen clearly in the fact that Sea Fisheries had had to cut quotas for commercial perlemoen fishermen from 90 tons a season to only 30 tons.

The crayfish resource particularly on the West Coast, has been under severe pressure in recent years and the total allowable catch had to be decreased to ensure that the resource remained healthy.

This year and last year thousands of crayfish walked out and died on beaches on the West Coast after a severe red tide decreased oxygen levels in the sea forcing the fish to leave the water.

Mr Engelbrecht said although poaching of crayfish was rife on the southern Cape coast, the resource in the area still appeared healthy. No commercial crayfish quotas are issued for the southern Cape Coast which helps protect the resource.

ILLEGAL HAUL: Sea Fisheries officials say they are powerless to prevent poachers taking crayfish

Park committee under fire

(56) ARG 7/12/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The Cape Peninsula National Park advisory committee is dysfunctional and should be disbanded, leading conservationist and committee member Richard Cowling has told Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan.

Professor Cowling, director of the University of Cape Town's Institute for Plant Conservation and one of South Africa's elite band of A-graded scientists, made his shock suggestion in a resignation letter.

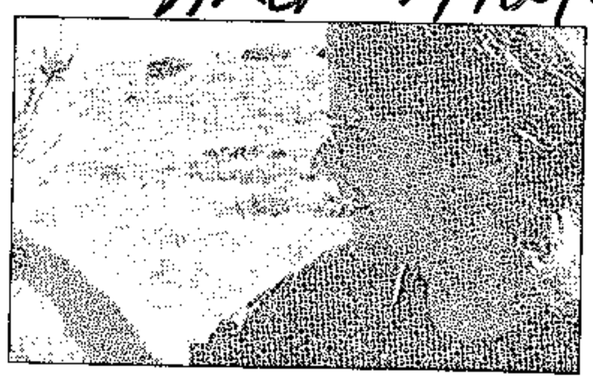
His move comes just a few months after the surprise resignation of the committee's founding chairman – National Botanical Institute chief executive Brian Huntley – and there is likely to be tough debate about the committee's future at its meeting today.

The committee was appointed by Dr Jordan to advise on the management of the new Cape Peninsula National Park, which was officially proclaimed earlier this year.

It consists of prominent conservationists like Dr Cowling and representatives of local authorities.

There have been disagreements about the committee's terms of reference and its working relationship with SA National Parks (formerly the National Parks Board) which manages the new park.

Major areas of controversy have included policy formulation for the new park and ways of incorporating valuable conservation land still in private ownership into the park.



Scientist: Professor Richard Cowling

Professor Cowling previously served on the management advisory committee of the former Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment (CPPNE) – the core of the new national park.

"The proclamation of the Cape Peninsula National Park, together with the leverage of funds from the Global Environmental Facility to ensure its sustainable development, exceeded my most extravagant expectations," Professor Cowling said in his letter.

He praised the park's managers for their "exceptional and effective" efforts in creating the park.

"A few years ago, the present circumstances – a proclaimed park, institutional capacity to manage it, and the financial capacity to effect management – seemed an impossible dream."

He had accepted nomination to the advisory committee "with enthusiasm". However, his time on the committee had proved to be "the most frustrating experience I have had in service to society".

"Sadly, I must conclude that the committee is irretrievably dysfunctional ... Bluntly stated, I do not have the time to waste."

Professor Cowling listed four main reasons for describing the committee as dysfunctional:

- It lacked administrative and political context.
- Its terms of reference were unworkable.
- There was an "irrevocable breakdown" in the relationship between certain committee members and certain park employees.
- There was another irrevocable breakdown in the relationship of the Peninsula Mountain Forum – an umbrella body of many mountain user groups – and certain members of the committee and park employees.

Professor Cowling suggested that the committee be disbanded and re-appointed in terms of explicit guidelines for its operation. Its terms of reference should be simple and unambiguous, and its main function would be to provide input for policies for the park that were consistent with SA National Parks' policies in general. "In practice, the SANP will be responsible for developing draft policies and plans. These will be evaluated by the committee and tested during a process of public participation," he suggested.

- Dr Jordan had not yet received Professor Cowling's letter, an environmental affairs spokesman said on Friday.

Fraudsters target SA's parks, national assets

(56)

Syndicate allegedly offers cash-strapped provincial and local authorities vast sums in exchange for promissory notes

Star 7/12/98

By Justin Arenstein and Rodney Victor

An international fraud syndicate has been trying to snatch up vast tracts of prime South African territory, including game parks, sports stadiums, magistrates' courts, police stations, schools and municipal roads.

The syndicate, specialising in illegal promissory notes, is believed to have masterminded at least 13 promissory notes currently being probed by investigators in four provinces.

The auditor-general's office is so concerned about the syndicate that it appealed to Finance Minister Trevor Manuel on November 26 for a co-ordinated approach to investigate the syndicate's activities.

They are currently being investigated by the auditor-general's office, Judge Willem Heath's special investigating unit, the Reserve Bank, the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and various crack police units.

The meeting was confirmed by Manuel's spokesperson, Logan Wort, who said last night the Government would do everything it could to stop provincial governments, parastatals and local authorities from issuing promissory notes pledging national assets in return for cash.

Spokesperson for the Heath unit, Guy Rich, said promissory notes were extremely dangerous. "They are extremely negotiable instruments, just like cash cheques. If you've got one, you can go anywhere in the world and discount it."

The syndicate allegedly approached various cash-strapped provincial and local bodies, offering them vast sums of money if they pledged provincial and municipal assets as collateral.

Earlier this year it was revealed how the Mpumalanga Parks Board secretly pledged the region's game parks as collateral in six illegal promissory notes, worth more than R1,3-billion. Among the reserves pledged were the Blyde River Canyon and the Songimvelo Reserve near Badplaas.

Rich said the Mpumalanga notes were "a very sensitive case. Fortunately there were not any losses. With the powers the Heath unit has we obtained an interdict to stop any honouring of the promissory notes, and one of our investigators went to New York and was able to recover them".

The new deals include:

- An attempt by the syndicate to persuade the Lepelle water board in the Northern Province to pledge its water reticulation infrastructure in the greater Phalaborwa region in return for $20-million (R110-million). The deal only reached draft stage and was never finalised, according to Jonathan Dutton of the Heath unit.
- An attempted deal with the Ekangala local council near Delmas, Mpumalanga, which would pledge its magistrate's court building, police station, three primary schools, sewerage works, water works, council housing and 400km of tarred road for two notes totalling R15-million. The deal was scrapped after being exposed.
- Attempts to enter into a deal with the Standerton local council which was offered a massive loan in US dollars if council assets were used as unconditional collateral. The exact amount of the loan is not known. Dutton said the deal had been "stopped in time".
- A deal with the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government which the NIA has been investigating for seven months. Dutton said it was believed this deal had already expired, and that the promissory note could no longer be used.
- Six fraudulent promissory notes issued on dud Gauteng housing department letterheads. All appear to have used provincial housing stock as collateral for loans totalling $20-million (R110-million).

Rich said five of the notes had been recovered, but one was still outstanding. It was still dangerous as it could involve the province in a lengthy and costly litigation to prove its fraudulent nature.

Gauteng Premier Mathole Motshekga has tried to bar Heath's unit from probing these notes. In a two-page letter to President Nelson Mandela dated October 26, he said Heath would waste tax money by duplicating internal investigations already launched by police and government auditors on July 17.

Park committee head quits

ARG 8/12/98 (56)

The controversy-ridden Cape Peninsula National Park committee has had further setbacks with the resignation of its chairman, Lester Coelen of the Mountain Club.

And there have been accusations by some of its members that SA National Parks is being insincere and underhand in its dealings with them.

The committee is to seek an urgent meeting with senior SA National Parks officials and Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan in an attempt to obtain clarity on its future.

The committee, consisting of prominent environmentalists and representatives of local authorities, was appointed by Dr Jordan in 1997 to advise on managing the new park.

However, there have been strong disagreements over its terms of reference and functions virtually since its inception.

Mr Coelen announced his decision to step down as chairman, but to remain a member, at the committee's meeting at Kirstenbosch yesterday.

The meeting highlighted deep

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

splits in conservation ideology among committee members, local environmentalists and park staff which have resulted in increasingly bitter confrontations and disputes during the past 18 months.

Mr Coelen told the Cape Argus later he had been "very frustrated" as chairman – partly by what he termed the "totally unrealistic" attitude of some environmental groups which opposed deals to incorporate privately-owned conservation land into the park. He did not name the groups.

His resignation comes just months after that of his predecessor, National Botanical Institute chief executive Brian Huntley, and soon after leading botanist Richard Cowling also announced his departure from the committee, saying it was dysfunctional and should be disbanded.

Also at yesterday's meeting, committee member Alida Croudace said she had been leaked a copy of the minutes of a SA National Parks directorate meeting, held in September.

These said that Cape Peninsula National Park co-ordinator David Daitz reported that the committee did not function effectively because of overlapping jurisdiction and because it was not representative.

The committee was also demanding executive authority which was causing escalating conflict, the minutes stated. Mr Daitz was recorded as saying that a senior SA National Parks official, Sarel Yssel, was working on a proposal to disband and reconstitute the committee with a clear mandate.

Ms Croudace demanded an explanation, saying she was "very concerned" that this critical information had been withheld from the committee. She was supported by Joyce Nduna, who called on SA National Parks "to play open cards".

NEW AGULHAS NATIONAL PARK

Southern tip of Africa sold

CT 8/12/98 (56) (288)

CAPE AGULHAS, the southernmost tip of Africa, was for years a brickmaker's holiday home. Now it's in the hands of the South African nation — at a cost of R1,8 million. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

SOUTH AFRICAN National Parks has bought the tip of the continent from a private landowner, and the 4,5ha property will be proclaimed part of the proposed Agulhas National Park early next year.

National Parks is also about to clinch a deal with Portnet, owners of 97ha of land around the Agulhas lighthouse and the southern tip, which will allow it to manage this land as part of the national park.

By March, when it proclaims the new park, National Parks hopes to have under its control 2 000ha of land around Agulhas.

The park body's ultimate goal is to acquire 15 000ha-20 000ha of land, home to some of the rarest and most-threatened habitats in the country.

The southern tip, which is visited by more than 80 000 tourists a year, is likely to become the economic engine of the future national park, generating tourist income to plough back into conservation.

National Parks is researching what tourists' expectations and preferences are when they arrive at the southern tip. The results will guide the development of park facilities.

It is likely that one of the conservation body's first moves will be to flatten the former owner's grey-brick holiday home, which sits right on the tip. Many tourists say it is ugly.

Rhiyaan Cupido, manager of commercial development for SA National Parks, said yesterday the area would probably be kept pristine.

"We'd like to develop facilities, particularly a restaurant, but we will first consult the local communities about anything we plan.

"My feeling is they will knock down the house at the tip, because it breaks up the natural landscape. That seems to be the feeling of the community," Cupido said.

In a quirk of fate, the southern tip of Africa has been in private hands for years — because the authorities identified the wrong location.

For more than a century, they believed it was the rocky outcrop, owned by the state, in front of the Agulhas lighthouse. For all those years tourists have been plodding down to see and photograph what they believed was the end of Africa.

They were at the wrong spot.

It was only in 1986, when the authorities decided to erect a beacon to mark the southernmost point, that surveyors discovered the real tip was about 200 metres west, in the middle of land then owned by a brickmaker from Paarl, Alf d'Aguiar.

D'Aguiar had lived there for a decade without knowing what a unique address he had. He told the *Cape Times* when he learnt that he had owned the southern tip of Africa that he was "quite chuffed".

"It's like being told you own Everest or something like that," he said.

He sold it to another brickmaker, Koos Malan from Mpumalanga. Malan told the *Cape Times* that he didn't really like the spot, which was too windy and desolate.

"The only thing right about that place was the address," he said.

Last year Malan decided to develop the southern tip — probably a restaurant and curio shop — and appointed a town planner to come up with ideas.

National Parks, already well into plans for establishing the national park, got twitchy when it realised it might have an Agulhas park sans Cape Agulhas, and negotiations began.

Asked why he had decided to sell, Malan replied: "*Ag*, a person changes. I've sold it to National Parks and now they can do whatever they like with it and I wish them luck. I still don't like the place, and I've never liked the house."

Locals say the price tag of R1,8m was what changed Malan's mind, and claim he made "a fat profit". Said one, who did not want to be named: "He knew he was getting rid of a lemon. There's no electricity or water there and with the new coastal management plan, he probably would have been very restricted as to what he could build, apart from the house already there. He's a businessman, and he saw a good deal in selling."

It is understood National Parks paid for the land from a fund established from the sale of live game from national parks.

Richard Cowling, head of the botany department at the University of Cape Town, welcomed the move. "The southern tip of Africa is a place which can't be replaced ... It will become the magnet for the Agulhas Park."

The lowland fynbos on the Agulhas plain, some of which will be incorporated into the future park, was "highly vulnerable and irreplaceable", and only 5% of it was conserved.

"There are about 100 plant species that occur there and nowhere else," he said.

John Basson of Portnet said a joint committee has been set up between Portnet and National Parks that will decide what sort of development will take place on their Agulhas land.

Park's planning talks on course

ARG 9/12/98 (56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Negotiations about a contract to produce a comprehensive management plan for the new Cape Peninsula National Park are likely to be concluded between the park's managers and the successful tenderer next week.

A management plan is a critical requirement for guaranteeing the park's future existence, as well as an essential element in the park's application for World Heritage Site status being made later this year.

The park's managers are insisting that a draft version of the plan be ready by June.

The new management plan will also incorporate a proposed framework for access to the park, which sparked an outcry from some conservationists when it was released for comment earlier this year.

One of the major criticisms of this framework was that it had been compiled before a management plan was in place.

The park's managers have given the assurance that people will be fully involved in the new process and will have ample opportunity for commenting before the management plan is finally approved.

James Jackelman, the park's environmental planner who is co-ordinating the awarding of the contract, said an international advertisement calling for expressions of interest for compiling the management plan had attracted more than 90 responses.

Six companies – two from South Africa and four from overseas – had been short-listed and given five weeks to submit technical and financial proposals in response to highly detailed terms of reference.

Some of the international companies had joined forces with the local bidders to create consortiums, and had submitted joint tenders.

The tenders were evaluated last month, and final details with the successful bidder would probably be negotiated next week.

"Hopefully, work on the management plan should begin by the first or second week of January," Mr Jackelman said.

He confirmed there had been more than 130 responses to the draft development framework, and that a consultant had been appointed to analyse them and summarise them into a report.

This report – which would be available in public libraries soon – would be incorporated into the management plan, he said.

The management plan would also have to provide for an environmental management system that could be audited annually.

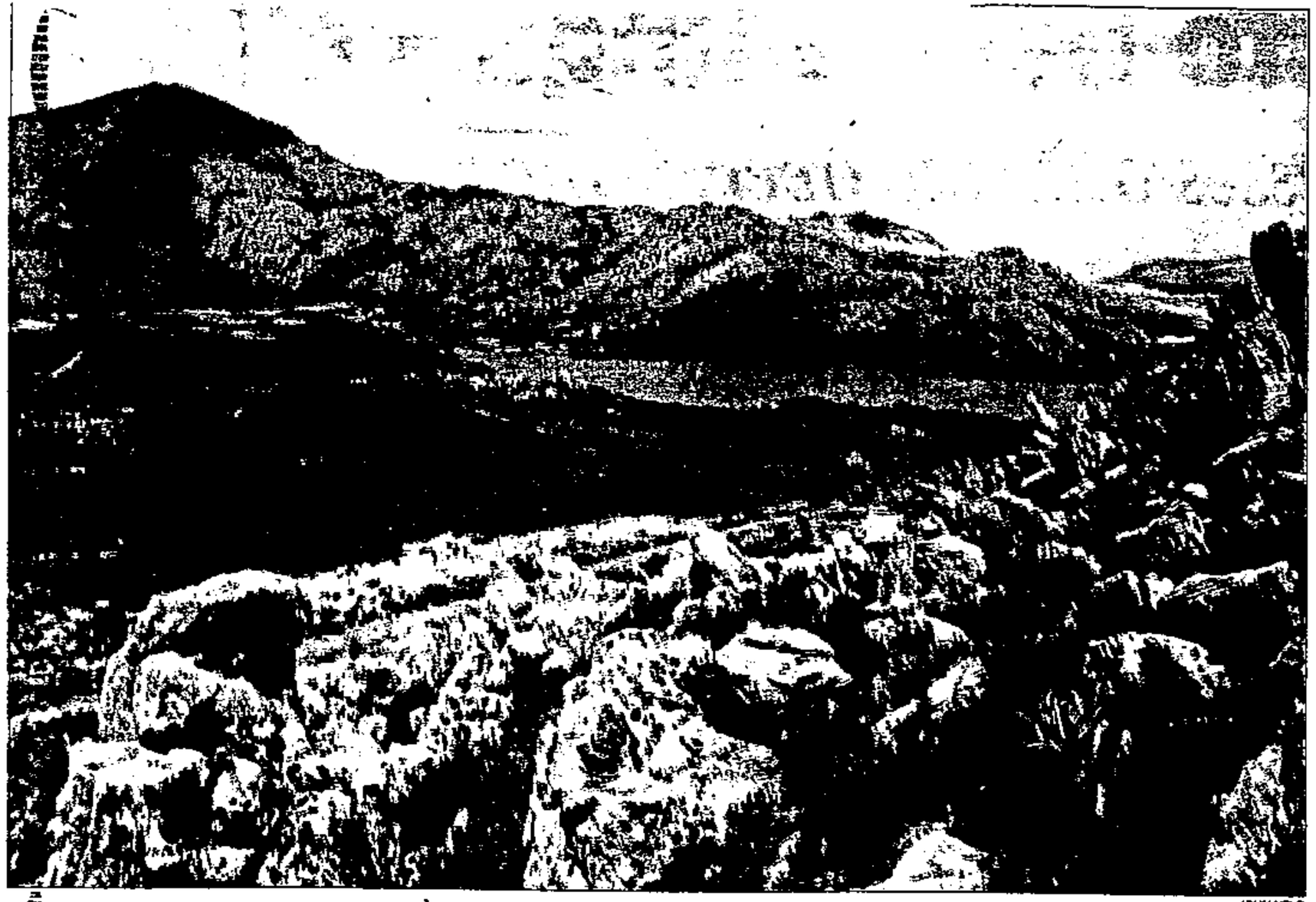
This was in line with the park's contractual obligations to the Peninsula's local authorities, which had transferred their conservation land to the park.

"So it's actually a very complex process," Mr Jackelman said.

"And we've also had to fast-track it to be able to meet the criteria for applying for World Heritage Site status for the park.

"Because the closing date for applications is July, we've told the consultants that we must have the first draft of the management plan by the end of June.

"Included in their terms of reference is that there must be comprehensive public involvement."



JOHN YELD

Good news! the former Somchem test site in the mountains above Rooi Els which has been cleared of pollutants and re-vegetated with fynbos

New beginnings: contaminated land expert Jon Mc Stay explains to visitors how the site was cleaned

Fynbos flourishes on the Rooi Els battlefield

(56) ARG 9/12/98

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

All's well that ends well, they say ... and that applies to Somchem's former test range in the fynbos-covered mountains above Rooi Els.

Both components of the controversial range – the "dynamic" facility where propellants for artillery shells were tested and the "static" facility where prototype rocket motors for South Africa's short-lived space programme were evaluated – are closed, and all physical structures have been removed.

A fynbos restoration programme is underway, and all pollutants have been removed from the site to meet tough environmental standards negotiated with the Hangklip Test Range Working Group, which includes public representatives.

The supply of unpolluted water from the Buffels River dam, just downstream of the test range, has been guaranteed, and there is an "in-principle" agreement that all the land involved will become part of the greater Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve.

"This will ensure that the site is conserved for future generations," said Charlie Boucher, a leading fynbos ecologist and chairman of the working group.

The last artillery shell was fired at the site last December 4 and the last of the six rocket-motor tests was in February 1993.

Somchem, a former Armscor subsidiary, hosted an open day at the site over the weekend, when about 150 conservationists and concerned property-owners from Rooi Els, Pringle Bay and Betty's Bay were brought up to date with the current status of the site.

The dynamic facility was established in 1979 on property leased from the then Caledon Divisional Council.

Somchem subsequently bought two adjacent smallholdings in 1987 and established the static facility.

The test range proved highly controversial, and public opposition mounted, particularly when it was found that water from the Buffels River dam – used by residents of Rooi Els, Pringle Bay and parts of Betty's Bay – was highly polluted with aluminium.

Somchem was blamed, although it later transpired that the municipal water treatment plant at the dam was at fault.

But there was also chemical pollution at the test site; notably, high levels of lead around the site used to test artillery shells.

In 1991 Rooi Els residents launched a High Court action challenging the legality of Somchem's presence on the hired site, and further testing of shells was in terms of an agreed court order of September 1993.

Partly because of the fierce opposition from some environmental and civic groups, Somchem decided to initiate a public participation process – initially in respect of the dismantling of the rocket motor test facility, and later also relating to the decommissioning of the dynamic test facility.

This in turn led to the formation of the working group.

Cleaning up the dynamic facility was done in terms of a "monitoring protocol", drawn up in consultation with the working group, and the actual work was done by a prominent environmental engineering group.

Key aspects included:

- Excavating a 250-350mm layer of lead-contaminated soil over an area of 5 500m² and disposing of it in an approved landfill site at Swartklip.
- Removing all foreign material, including the concrete "bullet-catcher", fences and tarred roads.
- Landscaping and revegetating 1,7ha of land disturbed by Somchem activities and a further 2,3ha damaged during dam-building.

At the open day, Somchem chief executive Johan Bestbier said there had been compromises during the rehabilitation process. "At the end I think it was a good balance of compromises that everyone is satisfied with."

He told the Cape Argus later that his company had spent close to R3-million rehabilitating the site.

"But we see that as a an investment, not a cost," he said.

Hangklip-Kleinmond mayor Willie Smuts said the water catchment area feeding the Buffels River dam was now in better shape than it had been, and that pollution was something of the past.

"At the end of the day, the water in the dam is safe for the community to drink ... Whatever you've read (about pollution) is something of the past," he said.

Mayor pledges to restore nature's splendour

Hangklip-Kleinmond mayor Willie Smuts has pledged himself to helping restore the natural splendour of his constituency.

The coastal strip and mountain fringe which make up the Rooi Els, Pringle Bay, Betty's Bay and Kleinmond area lie in the heart of the internationally-recognised Cape floral kingdom, and their combined scenic splendour is on a par with the world's great natural attractions.

But rampant development, associated environmental degradation and the rapid spread of alien invasive vegetation have caused this ecological jewel to lose some of its lustre.

Now Mr Smuts plans to restore the sparkle.

This follows his visit to the former Somchem test range in the mountains above Rooi Els.

Much of the site still boasts huge stands of beautiful, pristine fynbos which caught Mr Smuts's eye. To applause from the audience, he said: "I will channel all my energies towards getting the area outside also to look like this." – Environment Reporter

Mpumalanga govt asks Dolphin to renegotiate

BD 10/12/98 (56)

Cash-strapped province cannot honour multibillion-rand contract

NELSPRUIT — Mpumalanga's cash-strapped provincial government is trying to convince the multinational Dolphin Group to either scrap or renegotiate its multibillion-rand contract with the province.

The controversial contract grants Dolphin exclusive development rights to four of the province's prime game parks for 25 years in return for limited financial support of the ailing Mpumalanga Parks Board.

Provincial environmental MEC Fish Mahlalela said yesterday that the contract, signed in 1996, was legally binding but said the province was too cash-strapped to meet its financial obligations to Dolphin.

The contract obliges the parks board to provide all bulk infrastructure and mass earthworks for a string of envisioned developments in the reserves.

Mpumalanga's provincial executive committee pledged R86m to the board this year especially for infrastructure development, but has to date not paid any of the money.

"We're not disputing the contract itself but we're simply not able to live up to it. It's no longer either realistic or practical and we have informally asked Dolphin to reconsider the whole deal," said Mahlalela.

He also confirmed that the province had already been informally approached by a "series" of other international tourism developers for options to some of the reserves promised to Dolphin.

Mahlalela said Mpumalanga would ultimately want to scrap Dolphin's contract altogether.

"We definitely have not made any commitments but would love to reopen this whole deal to transparent public bidding. We can't unilaterally scrap Dolphin's agreement but this would be first prize," he said.

Dolphin had agreed to a formal meeting on the issue but the parks board had to reconvene its board of directors before any negotiations were entered into.

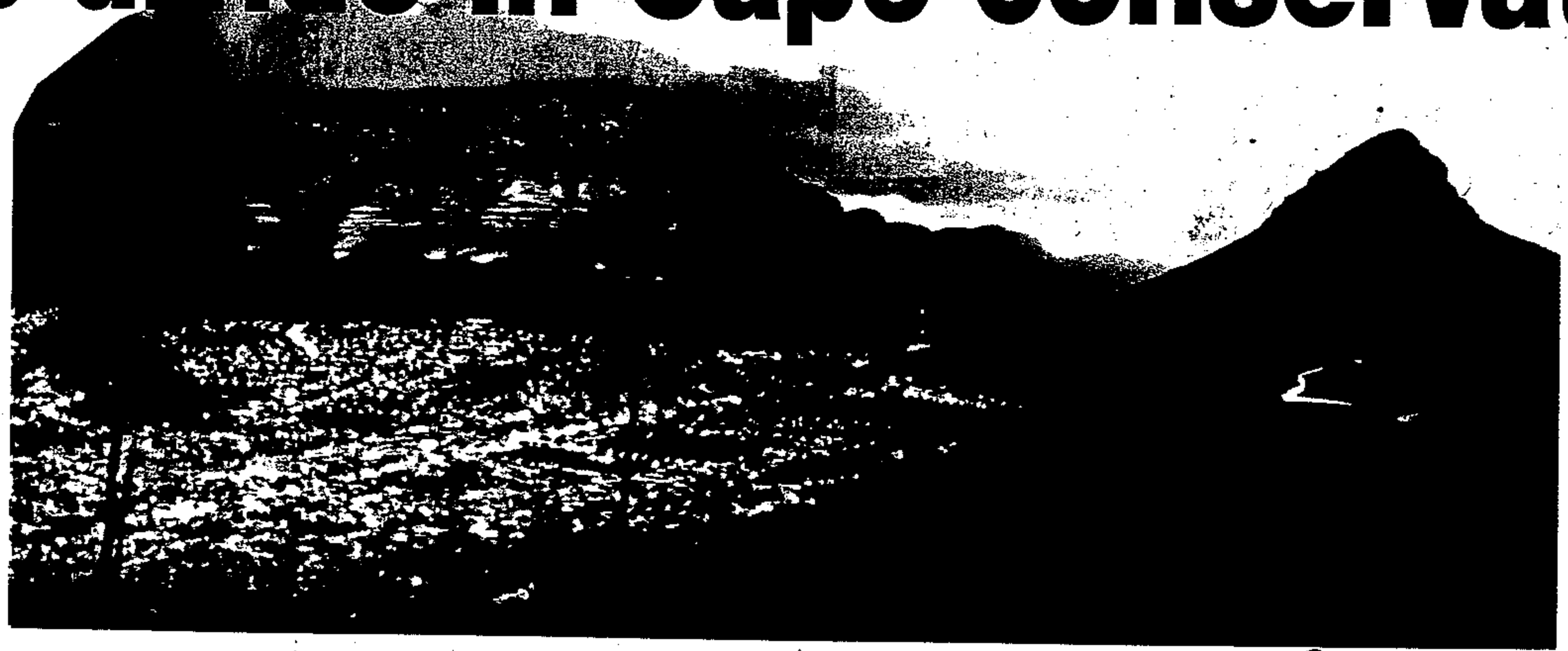
Half of the parks board's 10 members were suspended for alleged involvement in the illegal issue of six promissory notes worth R1,3bn earlier this year.

They have not yet been officially dismissed or replaced, as a commission of inquiry into the scam still has to be instituted.

Dolphin's SA representatives were unavailable for comment yesterday. — AENS.

CAPE ARGUS ISSUES

Deep divide in Cape conservation



ANDREW INGRAM

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Resignations, recriminations hit park committee

(56)

ARG 10/12/98

Aeons ago, some unimaginable geological force split the Table Mountain massif by driving a deep wedge through its heart.

Now, that unbridgeable physical gap known as Platteklip Gorge is a metaphor for the unhappy rift that has torn apart the Cape Peninsula National Park committee – a body supposedly dedicated to helping conserve the mountain chain.

And, in the same way as the original geological event exposed the stark sandstone cliffs on either side of the gorge, the ideological split in the committee has exposed deep differences of opinion about effective environmental management and accountable decision-making in South Africa.

The park committee was appointed by Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan in April last year, and – until several recent resignations and the unfortunate death of historian Dr Achmat Davids – consisted of 15 members: six representing the Western Cape government, local authorities in the Peninsula, SA National Parks and the National Monuments Council, and nine selected by Dr Jordan from nominations by the public.

They were appointed for three years and their terms of reference were spelled out by Dr Jordan.

It was to:

- Be the driving force for the new national park in the Cape Peninsula within the general policy framework of the National Parks Board (now called SA National Parks).
- Propose significant policies to the National Parks Board after wide public consultation.
- Monitor and advise the National Parks Board (NPB) on whether proper integrated environmental management procedures are followed during developments affecting the park.
- Monitor how the NPB reports to major interested and affected stakeholders on a regular basis.
- Recommend the appointment of advisory subsidiary committees.
- Recommend a name for the new national park after extensive public consultation.

Virtually the only one of those terms which the committee was able to meet with a unified voice was the recommendation of a name for the park, which was duly adopted: the Cape Peninsula National Park.

Sharp differences of interpretation over the other terms of reference manifested themselves from the outset, and there were clashes – some very bitter – between committee members, between some committee members and some members of the park's staff, and between some committee members and representatives of environmental organisations which kept a close watch on the committee's proceedings.

Hampering events was the committee's lack of capacity: it had no budget and no staff.

Major disagreements were immediately apparent, relating to the extent and manner of the committee's involvement in policy- and decision-making in the new park, and of its public accountability.

The committee was accused by some environmentalists and some of its own members of being both ineffective and lacking accountability.

By September, committee chairman Brian Huntley, chief executive of the National Botanical Institute, decided he had had enough of the continuing conflict and quit.

In his letter to Dr Jordan, Professor Huntley cited in-fighting and disagreement among committee members and continued attacks on the committee and on SA National Parks among reasons for his resignation.

In September he was followed by Richard Cowling, head of UCT's Institute for Plant Conservation, who told Dr Jordan bluntly that the park committee lacked "administrative and political context", its terms of reference were unworkable, and it was "dysfunctional".

This week, Lester Coelen resigned as chairman, saying he was "deeply frustrated".

Some committee members and observers from environmental groups – notably Alida Croudace of the Red Hill Landowners Conservation Group, the Wildlife Society and the Peninsula Mountain Forum – take a strongly contrary view.

They agree that the committee is dysfunctional but for totally different reasons, and argue that it must be allowed to continue.

They allege that those who resigned were not committed to proper public accountability and open decision-making, as embodied in the Government's latest environmental management legislation.

The Forum, an umbrella body representing many organisations using the mountain for recreation and conservation, goes so far as to claim that the committee's inability to function properly is "in large degree due to the failure of SA National Parks in providing information to the committee and the public".

Ms Croudace is particularly incensed at the discovery – by courtesy of leaked minutes faxed anonymously to her – that SA National Parks has been discussing the possible disbanding of the committee and reconstituting it in a different form.

The committee's deputy chairman, Ziggy Roux, shares her feelings. Speaking at the committee's meeting this week, he said there were many grounds on which it could be criticised, but it was inexcusable for it not to be told about plans to disband it.

"I feel it's almost beyond comprehension that such a thing wasn't brought to our attention. This is plain and simply underhand."

But committee colleague Ed February took a different view, saying all the committee had done was "fight and bicker and gripe and complain".

"I've come very close to resigning. I really do believe we should do something about this, and very rapidly, otherwise I'm not going to waste my time either," he said.

In a tough statement after the committee's meeting, the Wildlife Society asked why paid officials of SA National Parks even considered disbanding and reconstituting a committee which had been established by a national minister, "precisely to bridge the gap between the people of the area where the park is located and the officials that manage the park".

"People of Cape Town must ponder these questions and seek answers," spokesman Andy Gubb said.

"They must know that there is a deep division among the members of the committee, appointed to represent their interests in the establishment and management of the Cape Peninsula National Park.

"In essence, much of this conflict centres around the issues of public participation, inclusiveness and transparency.

"It is about a commitment to transformation, or a lack thereof. It is about how decisions are made and whether or not those decisions are open to public scrutiny and genuine public participation.

"It is a conflict between an 'old guard' who seem to wish to do the same things in the same way, and the 'new guard' who are committed to nation-building and transformation."

The society said Dr Jordan should not disband the committee.

"He should give his urgent attention to filling the vacancies to ensure that the committee has the capacity to fulfil its mandate, reflects a commitment to transformation; and is independent of SA National Parks."

Speaking to the Cape Argus after the meeting, Mr Coelen said he was deeply frustrated by some environmental groups' unwillingness to compromise over moves to incorporate valuable conservation land currently in private ownership into the park.

Without naming those he was referring to, Mr Coelen said: "I would also love to have a perfect world, but it doesn't exist.

"They (the environmental groups) are trying to achieve the unachievable – nobody is going to give his land to the park for nothing.

"You can't say 'no negotiations'. I will never give any rights away, but how do you get someone to give you something (other than through negotiation)?"

Just how Dr Jordan is going to react to the controversy is not yet clear. But what is clear is that the real loser in this battle is the Peninsula's priceless natural heritage.

Mpumalanga wants out of Dolphin deal

CT(BR) 10/12/98 (56)

FROM SAPA

Nelspruit — Mpumalanga is trying to convince the multinational Dolphin group to either scrap or renegotiate its multibillion rand contract with the province, African Eye News Service reported yesterday.

The contract grants Dolphin exclusive development rights to four of the province's prime game parks for 25 years in return for limited financial support of the ailing Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB).

Fish Mahlalela, the environment affairs MEC, yesterday said the contract signed in 1996 was legally binding, but the province lacked funds to meet its financial obligations to Dolphin.

The contract obliges the MPB to provide all bulk infrastructure and mass earthworks for a string of envisioned developments in the reserves.

The provincial executive committee pledged R86 million to the MPB this year, mainly for infrastructure development, but has to date not paid any of the money.

"We're not disputing the contract itself, but we're simply not able to live up to it. It's no longer either realistic or practical, and we have informally asked Dolphin to reconsider the whole deal," Mahlalela said.

The province had been informally approached by a series of other international tourism developers for options to some of the reserves promised to Dolphin.

Mpumalanga would ultimately want to scrap Dolphin's contract. "We definitely haven't made any commitments, but would love to reopen this whole deal to transparent public bidding."

Dolphin had agreed to a formal meeting on the issue.

Half of the 10-member MPB board was suspended for alleged involvement in the illegal issue of six promissory notes worth R1,3 billion earlier this year. Their future is undecided as a commission of inquiry still has to be instituted.

Dukuduku forest saved ... for now

M+G 11-17/12/98 (56)

Niki Barker

Destruction of the Dukuduku state forest in KwaZulu-Natal's Greater St Lucia Wetland Park came to an abrupt end this week, after Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs Kader Asmal made the national government's position quite clear: there is no negotiation on land invasions.

The people of Dukuduku were occupying the forest illegally, he said, and they had no option but to move.

After meeting a committee appointed by the forest dwellers on Sunday, Asmal issued a statement called the Dukuduku Declaration. It decrees people will be resettled on alternative land that will be acquired for them, and the South African National Defence Force and police will be deployed to assist if necessary.

Although forcible removal is not an option, it is made clear the settlers will have a miserable time if they try to defy the government again.

For the conservationists who watched with alarm as the illegal invasion of the Dukuduku forest accelerated, it was a rare and decisive victory. But for the residents of the forest, who have been given promises of ownership by leaders who had no legal right to parcel out the land, it was a crushing blow.

Traditional leaders had been encouraging them to stay in the forest, and had been making assurances that their future was secure.

Under this benign patronage, the inhabitants had swelled from 2 000 to about 30 000. Now this mass of people have to find somewhere else to stay.

The KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service representatives expressed mixed feelings. Although they had hoped for the preservation of the forest, a challenge lies ahead not to get the people out of the forest, but to keep them out.

The Department of Land Affairs must identify and purchase alternative land for settlement. A census needs to be taken of the people who are living there, how many of them have a legitimate land claim.

Meanwhile, a committee that represents the interests of the forest dwellers has ambitious plans for a lodge, walking trails, ecotourism excursions, agriculture and other schemes which tap into the enormous potential of the international tourist trade at Lake St Lucia.

If they are successful, it will provide a case study for ecotourism development. If they are unsuccessful, the forest will be re-invaded.

Council breathes promise of sweeter air

(56) CT 11/12/98

JO-ANNE SMETHERHAM

SOME of the stench suffered by residents of several areas around the Athlone Refuse Station will disappear next year. At least, this was the promise of the Cape Metropolitan Council at the launch of the station's upgrading yesterday, where community organisations vowed to monitor progress.

Residents of Langa, Pinelands, Athlone and Kewtown have been complaining for years about unpleasant odours emitted by the refuse station. But the smells will not vanish with the station's upgrading. The nearby Athlone Power Station, the Maitland Crematorium on Voortrekker Road and the sewerage works at Athlone also contribute to the odour, said the Head of Waste Management at the CMC, Peter Novella.

Members of community organisations said the smells from the refuse station can be clearly distinguished. Refuse remains at the station for up to a week.

In the first stage of the refuse station's upgrading, the sides and top of the 2 500 cubic metre area will be enclosed. The improvement will cost R4,4 million and has been tagged by the CMC as "the latest in international technology".

Other aspects of the first phase are that inside the building, essential plant oils will counteract odours from the refuse and ventilator fans will suck out the exhaust fumes from the trucks.

The work will be completed by May, said the director of Entech, the civil engineering company consulted by the CMC. But some odours from the refuse station will linger for at least six months after May.

"The station is a transfer, rather than a dumping area. Open bails of refuse awaiting rail transport emit a ghastly smell around Langa station," said a representative from the Langa Environmental Forum.

According to Novella, the second phase of the upgrade, when the refuse is enclosed inside containers, will solve this problem. The second phase has not yet been put out for tender, but finance is ready and the phase could be finished by next September.

Representatives from Langa Environmental Forum and Civic Organisation agreed that the smell is a serious problem in their areas.

"We smell the refuse plant almost all the time," said Aaron Habongwana of the Tsoga Environmental Research Centre at Langa Environmental Forum.

"Together with the sewerage plant, it has certainly been a problem in Langa since at least 1972, when I was born."

Representatives from the Kewtown and Athlone Civic Organisation said that in Athlone the smell has been "unbearable" for many years, and is highly noticeable during soccer matches at Athlone Stadium.

'SCHEME WILL DESTROY ESTUARY'

Daggers drawn over Knysna development

CT 11/12/98

(56)

THE PLANNED development of Thesen Island in the Knysna Lagoon has drawn strong criticism from environmental groups. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

DEVELOPERS of Thesen's Island in the Knysna Lagoon plan to carve up the 97ha property into 27 separate islands which will be separated by canals. Ten of these will be privately owned.

The developers have launched a marketing drive for the R800m luxury scheme, saying it would boost Knysna's economy, create jobs and add 15km of new waterfront property.

But many Knysna residents — and SA National Parks — have serious reservations about the massive project, with hundreds of housing units, a hotel, shops, offices, a conference centre, canal, bridges and buildings up to four storeys high.

They say it is the wrong kind of development for the ecologically sensitive lagoon, part of the National Lakes Area.

They also say that although jobs might be created during the construction phase, 1 500 jobs at the sawmill on Thesen's Island will be lost if the development goes ahead.

Although the project has not yet been approved, it has already run into problems.

The developers have erected their sales houses on the island without approved building plans, and closer to the lagoon's edge than the law allows.

When the National Parks officials in Knysna halted the construction, the developers threatened the organisation with legal action.

Said National Parks warden Peet Joubert: "If this is the kind of thing we have to deal with before the development has even begun, where will it end?"

The construction of the project will take five years.

The developers have appointed an environmental management committee for the project. Joubert, who is on the committee, says: "We've learnt a couple of very hard lessons from the unfinished Knysna Quays development. At one stage I had to invoke the Water Act when they were dredging.

"If you look at the massive size of the Thesen Island plan, I'm pretty sure it's going to destroy the Knysna estuary," Joubert said.

Jim Saunders, chairperson of the Outeniqua Trust, said there was "a lot of opposition" to the development.

"It's unbelievably dense, with no public open space. They're going to be dredging to build up the island which will have serious implications for the lagoon.

"Look what happened at Knysna Quays. They say their engineers will put their reputations on the line, but they said that for Simola golf course and that was a disaster.

"Most people want to get the sawmill off the island, but not to be replaced with a development like this," Saunders said.

Toni Tonin, chairperson of the Knysna Environmental Forum, said one of the "many contentious issues" about the development was what would happen to the people who worked at the sawmill on the island.

"The developers talk about relocation, but there is no commitment. My suspicions are there will be substantial job losses.

"I've got serious problems with the scale and the nature of the development. The height restrictions must be addressed. It is essential that more information is given to the public.

"The whole thing has changed since the public scoping process in the early 90s and the public don't know about this scheme," Tonin said.

But Allan Heydorn, who chairs an environment committee appointed by the developers to oversee the project, said he had reviewed the environmental impact assessment and was impressed with it.

He said there would be a public information meeting in February after the rezoning had been approved.

Asked if the public meeting should not rather be held before rezoning approval, giving the public time to lodge objections, Heydorn said: "There has already been an opportunity for full comment from the public."

Environment and Wildlife Society spokesperson Lorna Watt said the annual wage bill of the sawmill was around R20m.

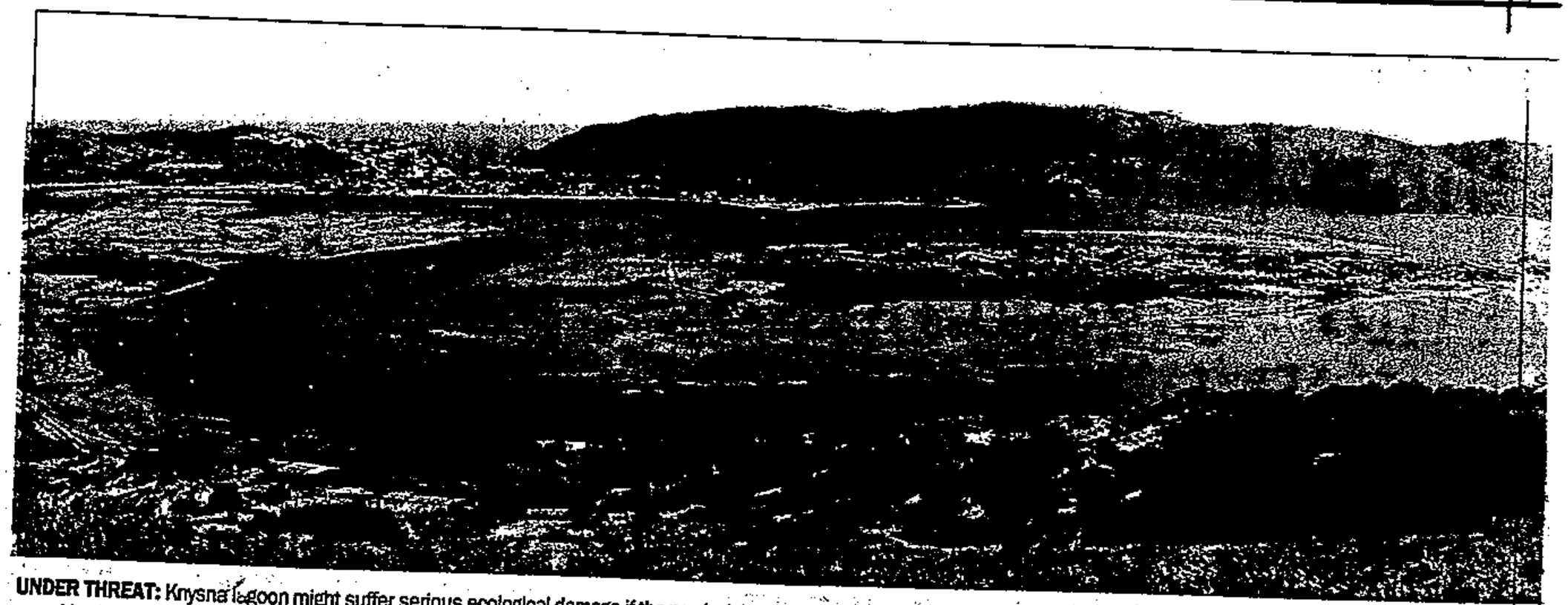
"That will be lost to the economy when the sawmill closes. What effect will it have on the probably 1 000 families supported by it?

"And the developers may say the reputation of their engineers is on the line, but if the dredging for canals means the lagoon's invertebrate's beds are covered with sand, that's it. You can't put the ecosystem right again," Watts said.

Spokesperson for the developer, Chris Mulder, said yesterday there would be "no negative environmental impacts".

"We will have an environmental control officer on site with powers to stop the construction," he said. He denied the impact studies were dated, and said the construction would take place according to international standards.

The application to rezone Thesen's Island is now with MEC for Planning, Michael Louis.



UNDER THREAT: Knysna lagoon might suffer serious ecological damage if the provincial authorities approve a huge development that will crisscross Thesen's Island with canals and crowd it with houses, shops and offices.

AECI sued for R200m on fires

CT (BR) 15/12/98 (56)

RONNIE MORRIS

Cape Town — AECI, the commodity chemicals group, is facing a R200 million damages action from Macassar residents following fires at its sulphur stockpiles at Somerset West three years ago.

Last year Siraj Desai, the judge who chaired a commission of inquiry into the fire and its consequences, found AECI's conduct causally negligent in that it had taken no steps to assess the risk of fire from sulphur storage and did not take precautionary measures.

In addition, the 4 000 residents are suing AECI Operations Services, a service company within the AECI group, and Cape Explosives Works, a property holding company.

Also cited are Josef Erasmus Coetzee, the managing director of AOS; AW Humphries, the general manager of the Somerset West site; Michael Douglas, the loss manager at the site; and Leonard Guthrie, the fire master.

A stockpile of 15 000 tons of sulphur stored in a grassy veld at the site caught fire five times between December 13 and 16 1995.

The fires consumed 7 250 tons of sulphur and released a sulphur dioxide cloud which drifted over and enveloped the township of Macassar.

This development led to evacuation of Macassar residents from their homes and to thousands suffering adverse physical reactions. These included vomiting and nausea; coughing; burning; irritation of the nose and eyes; asthma-like attacks; bronchitis; chest pains; puffy, teary and bloodshot eyes; and longer-term respiratory injury.

The residents further claim that the sulphur dioxide cloud destroyed and damaged their property. This claim included food, pets, gardens, indoor plants, vegetable crops, soft furnishings, linen, clothing, furniture and woodwork.

They also said they suffered emotional stress and, in some cases, psychological impairment.

They claim that AECI, its subsidiaries and the managers failed in several respects to exercise reasonable care to ensure that the stockpile did not ignite, and to contain the risk if it did ignite.

The plaintiffs charged that AECI became jointly and severally liable for their injury, damage and loss.

They therefore claimed judgment against the defendants and the costs of the suit.

AECI sued for R200m after fires

CT 15/12/98 (56)

STAFF WRITER

THREE years to the day after poisonous gases from a sulphur stockpile fire at AECI's Somerset West site badly affected 4 000 Macassar residents, the company is being sued for R200 million in damages.

Observers said it was the first environment impact disaster lawsuit in South African legal history and also the first time so many plaintiffs have been joined.

Had the claims been brought later than today, they might have been prescribed because legal action must be brought within three years.

Following a commission of inquiry, Justice Siraj Desai ruled in July last year that AECI's conduct had been causally negligent.

The company had taken no steps — from the time when the stockpiles were established in 1967 to December 1995 — to assess the risks of fire and introduce safety measures, the commission found.

Judge Desai expressed concern about the tardiness of the Department of Trade and Industry and AECI in disposing of the sulphur stockpile before and after the incident.

It was subsequently decided by the government last year to distribute the remaining 8 000 tons of sulphur to Swartland farmers free of charge.

To avoid issuing 4 000 individual summonses, 70 summonses were issued on behalf of groups of between 50 and 70 residents. Supporting documentation in the summonses number about 200 pages while the overall documentation amounts to 54 000 pages.

Their lawyer, Taswell Papier, and his fellow lawyers, have been working until about 3am every day for the past month to issue the summonses in time.

When five fires raged at the stockpiles between December 13 and 16, 1995, a sulphur cloud hung over the township of 30 000 people. Two asthmatic brothers, Ronald, 47, and Andrew Williams, 54, died of respiratory problems and 150 people were hospitalised as a result of the toxic gases. The Williams families have indicated they will institute a separate claim against AECI of more than R1 million in damages.

It took 12 bulldozers, three helicopters, 20 firefighting vehicles and 150 firemen to douse the fires. An equal number of police and traffic officers helped.

In addition to suing AECI, the residents are also bringing the action against AECI Operations Services (Pty) Limited (AOS) — a service company within the AECI group — Cape Explosives Works Limited, Josef Erasmus Coetzee, managing director of AOS, A W Humphries, general manager of

Turn to Page 3

LEGAL HISTORY: Lawyers finalise the paperwork in the damages action brought by Macassar residents against AECI. *PICTURE: WAYNE CONRADIE*

AECI sued for R200m after Macassar fires

From Page 2

the Somerset West site, Michael Douglas, loss manager at the site, and Leonard Edmund McDonald Guthrie, fire-master at the site.

In their particulars of claim, the residents say that the stockpile of 15 000 tons of sulphur stored in a grassy veld at the site caught fire five times between December 13 and 16, 1995, during which 7 250 tons of sulphur were consumed.

A sulphur dioxide cloud was released into the atmosphere and drifted over and enveloped Macassar and led to the large-scale evacuation of residents from their homes.

The residents said they were not evacuated from their homes early enough to escape injury caused by the sulphur dioxide cloud and that thousands of people suffered adverse physical reactions, including vomiting and nausea, coughing, burning, irritation of the nose and eyes, asthma-like attacks, bronchitis, chest pains, puffy, teary and bloodshot eyes and longer-term respiratory problems and emotional stress and psychological damage.

The residents further claim the sulphur dioxide cloud destroyed and damaged their property, including food, pets, gardens, indoor plants, vegetable crops, soft furnishings, linen, clothing, furniture and woodwork.

They contend that AECI, its subsidiaries and the managers failed in various respects to exercise reasonable care to ensure that the stockpile did not ignite, and if it did, to contain the risk.

They also failed to take any precautions, alternatively failed to take adequate precautions to protect the stockpile against the risk of fire.

The residents further claim that AECI and its managers failed to establish and maintain a firefighting service at the site and further failed to establish and maintain an appropriate fire protection plan.

A Somerset West Emergency Action Plan (SWEAP) was prepared, but AECI failed to ensure that it made provision for adequate emergency back-up staff and facilities for their internal firefighting service.

The residents further claim that the company and its managers had failed to apply and adhere to an engineering code of practice for the handling and storage of sulphur in their management of the stockpile.

The company is also accused of having failed to post a guard at the site of the recurring grass fires from December 13 to 16 to raise the alarm if the fire flared up again.

The residents contend that AECI failed to activate the SWEAP plan or to do so timeously; delayed unduly in calling out the external firefighting services; delayed unduly in informing Macassar residents of the emergency created by the fire.

Some of the damages actions will be heard in the Somerset West Magistrate's Court and others will be heard in the High Court. Six other law firms are also acting for various Macassar residents.

CT 15/12/98

Roots of a tragedy: one of Kommetjie's famous milkwood trees, which was severely damaged, allegedly by subcontractors. Two trees were destroyed by fire

OBED ZILWA

Charges after milkwoods burnt down

ARG 16/12/98 (56)

Anger in Kommetjie

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Nature conservation authorities are to lay charges against a Somerset West contractor after some of Kommetjie's famous milkwood trees were severely damaged during construction work .

Two of the trees, estimated to be at least 100 years old and described as among the most magnificent in the village, caught fire when barrels of bitumen being heated for road repairs linked to the installation of a new sewerage system burst into flame.

The bitumen was being heated over an open fire under the milkwoods – right next to a sign saying "No fires" and "Milkwood trees are protected".

Kommetjie residents are outraged at what they say is blatant carelessness.

Said Piet Erasmus, chairman of the residents' association: "No penalty, no matter how harsh, will bring back these trees. Memories, history and beauty have been destroyed in a flash of unintelligence, and in the face of written signs warning against just that."

Mr Erasmus explained that the South Peninsula Municipality had awarded a contract for the installation of a waterborne sewerage system in the older part of Kommetjie.

"The contract ran into various difficulties – like unexpected rocky outcrops and high water tables which delayed completion."

Residents had tolerated unfinished roads and road verges littered with sand, rocks and excavated chunks of bitumen for the past eight months without complaining too loudly.

"We appreciate the environmentally-friendly pump stations and the replanting of grass in the Kom area – disfigured by pipe-laying activities – which come before the holiday season pours hundreds of day visitors into the area," Mr Erasmus said.

"We were really impressed by the conditions of contract which provided for special protective measures that have to be taken when excavating near and around milkwood trees.

"What we could not foresee and guard against was the callous attitude of the contractor/sub-contractors about the environmental impact of their non-digging actions."

Two of the milkwoods had been destroyed by the fire, and further down the road – at a considerable distance from the digging and pipe-laying – a thick milkwood branch had been broken off, presumably by the contractors' heavy equipment, Mr Erasmus said.

"This is really a day of despondence for all Kommetjie residents."

Kenny van der Westhuizen of Cape Nature Conservation confirmed charges were being laid against the subcontractor responsible for the fire.

"Those trees are at least 100 years old – possibly older. It looks very bad there," he said.

NATIONAL HERITAGE BILL

(176) FM 18/12/98

BRICKS AND MORTAR OF HISTORY

Property owners raise objections to proposed new law

The Minister of Arts, Culture, Science & Technology's proposed National Heritage Bill has drawn opposition from the SA Property Owners' Association (Sapoa), which represents SA's property industry.

The purpose of revamping the law is to increase the powers of the body responsible for preserving heritage sites. That authority now rests with the National Monuments Council. Over the past three years, 65 properties have been declared national monuments throughout SA.

Sapoa president Anton Musgrave says the organisation supports the protection of the country's heritage, but "the Bill in its current form displays a total disregard for private initiative and property rights as protected by the Constitution".

Sapoa's concern is that the Bill will stifle development initiatives. This is because the National Monuments Council will have the power to declare, by notice, any place to be a heritage site. From the declaration date, a property will be "sterilised" for development for six months, without any compensation to the owners. Neighbouring properties, which may form part of a "protected area", could also be affected.

Sapoa also disputes the wide powers proposed for the SA Heritage Agency (Saha), which would replace the National Monuments Council. Musgrave says Saha should act only as an advisory body to the Minister. "It should not be granted juristic personality nor the capacity to prescribe regulations applicable to heritage management. Saha has no constituency or accountability and may even usurp the functions of the Registrar of Deeds and the Surveyor-General."

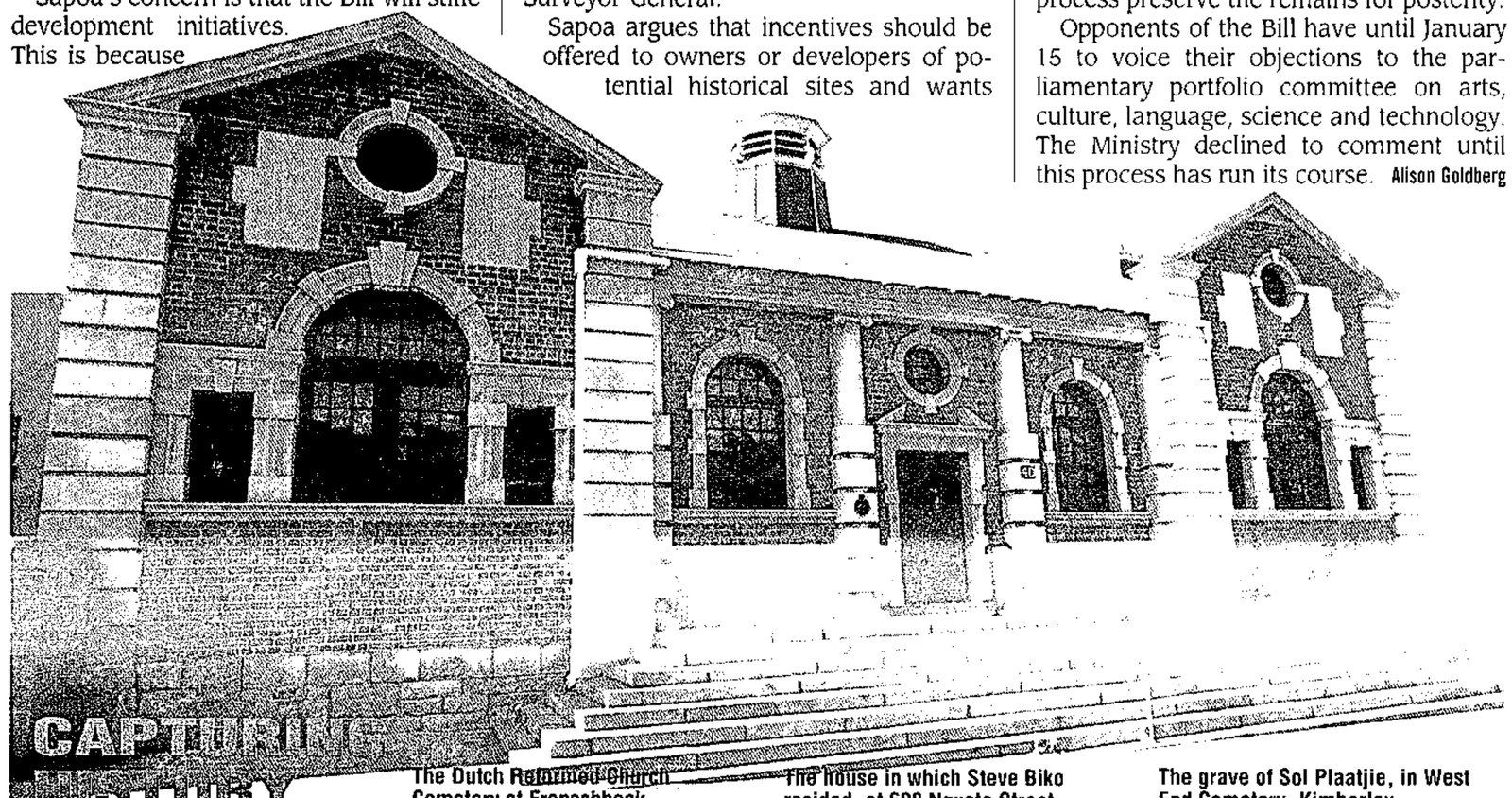
Sapoa argues that incentives should be offered to owners or developers of potential historical sites and wants more thought to be given to compensation. Such an approach would protect the national heritage more effectively, it says.

The Bill also stipulates that a declared heritage site has to be maintained by the owner.

If they fail to do so, the proposed Bill gives Saha the power to order repairs and charge the owners for the cost. Saha can also halt developments while it investigates heritage sites, and bill the owner of the property for the costs of the investigation, even if it proves negative.

Previously, as in the case of the discovery of the remains of a reservoir by Sanlam during construction of Cape Town's Golden Acre, the developer was able to continue development and in the process preserve the remains for posterity.

Opponents of the Bill have until January 15 to voice their objections to the parliamentary portfolio committee on arts, culture, language, science and technology. The Ministry declined to comment until this process has run its course. **Alison Goldberg**



CAPTURING HISTORY

The original cell-block of the old Maritzburg prison, at 2 Burger Street, Maritzburg.

The Old Post Office in Boksburg (above)

August 8 1996

The Dutch Reformed Church Cemetery at Franschhoek.

The East facade of the original Groote Schuur hospital with the incinerator tower, the Palm court and the operating theatre in which the first heart transplant was performed, Cape Town.

October 4 1996

The house in which Steve Biko resided, at 698 Ngxata Street, Ginsberg, King William's Town.

September 12 1997

The site of the aeroplane accident in which President Samora Machel died, near the Mbuzini settlement, Barberton District.

September 26 1997

The grave of Sol Plaatjie, in West End Cemetery, Kimberley.

February 27 1998

The property with the Alhart Luthuli House thereon, in Groutville, Lower Tugela District

May 22 1998

Selection of national monuments gazetted since 1996

Peninsula beaches fail bacteria tests

CT 18/12/98 (56)

JO-ANNE SMETHERHAM

FAECAL pollution at some Peninsula beaches could be a health risk for bathers, but the Cape Metropolitan Council says it is tackling the problem.

The surf at Kalk Bay's Harbour beach, Three Anchor Bay and the Disa River at Hout Bay has shown potentially unsafe levels of bacteria that indicate faecal pollution. This is according to the 1998 Cape Metropolitan Coastal Water Quality Committee report, which monitored coastal waters from October 1997 to this September.

The pollution is invisible, and because it is "difficult and expensive" to link ill health to water pollution, there is no proven link between the two, the report said.

"The Cape Metropolitan Council is carefully monitoring Peninsula beaches at over 75 places on the coastline," said Arthur Clayton of CMC's water and waste directorate.

Safety levels are assured by two types of counts. The report does not assure safety unless beaches pass both tests. Kalk Bay, Hout Bay and Three Anchor Bay all failed both counts. Beaches at Granger Bay, Mouille Point, Bakoven, Gordon's Bay and several Muizenberg beaches failed one of the two tests.

In one of the study's sampling modes, which used a level of 100 faecal coliforms per 100 millilitres of water as a cut-off for health risks, Kalk Bay's count averaged 834 and Three Anchor Bay's 900. In contrast, Macassar beach and Camps Bay beach, for example, were found to be safe, with faecal coliform counts well below 100.

At Kalk Bay's Harbour Beach, notices warn bathers of the pollution risk. Fishing fleets, storm water, seals and gulls cause the faecal build-up, which is not, says Clayton, adequately flushed out to sea.

Television cameras within the sewerage and the tracer dyes used to identify sewer leaks were part of a CMC investigation into pollution along the Kalk Bay-Muizenberg coast over the past six months. A septic tank at Bailey's Cottage proved to be one source of pollution. It has since been closed down. Clayton says the investigation is continuing.

At Hout Bay, sewerage from septic tanks had filtered into the groundwater — then the river, lagoon and sea — by the time the report was completed. The septic tanks are being "eliminated" and the sewerage system is being extended as it does not service all Hout Bay houses.

At Three Anchor Bay, a pipe leading to a sewer was blocked, causing the worst pollution at any of the beaches monitored. The pipe has since been repaired.

Clayton said that summer swimmers are probably less exposed to the pollution than the study indicates, as stormwater is a winter phenomenon in the Cape.

BEAUTIFUL BUT DEADLY: Wildevoëlvlei near Kommetjie has been hit by a new outbreak of highly toxic blue-green algae

Kommetjie killer algae bloom again

ARG 19/12/98

Lagoon, vlei danger zones

(56)

JOHN YELD

Warning signs have again been posted at Wildevoëlvlei and the nearby Kommetjie beach lagoon after new blooms of deadly poisonous blue-green algae were found in the vlei system.

People have been warned to avoid the water in the vlei and not to walk or bathe in the lagoon until further notice.

Earlier this year, the toxic algae – which are only slightly less poisonous than cobra venom – spread through the vlei and into the mussel beds, where the system discharges into the sea at Klein Slangkop.

The algae were killed in a R400 000 operation which included "bombing" the vlei with 300 tons of salt from a helicopter and artificially opening the channel to the sea to flush the system.

The operation was successful, but environmentalists warned at the time that unless there was an improvement in the quality of the water both entering the vlei and already in the vlei, the blue-green algae problem would probably recur.

The vlei is artificially fed by effluent from the adjoining sewerage works, and by stormwater run-off from developments in the Kommetjie-Noordhoek area.

The new blue-green algal growth has been boosted by hot weather.

This week, the South Peninsula Municipality erected the warning signs and posted notices to local residents, urging people to avoid any contact with the contaminated water in the vlei and to keep their animals away as well.

"Some of the symptoms which may be experienced when coming into contact with contaminated water may include skin rashes, eye irritations and gastro intestinal upsets," the notice states.

"However, some of the toxins produced are extremely toxic and may in fact cause death in humans and animals."

Julia Wood of the South Peninsula Municipality's environmental management directorate said this week that the toxins were at present contained in the two vleis of Wildevoëlvlei and the beach lagoon, and the nearby mussel beds were not affected.

To minimise the health risk, it had been decided jointly by the South Peninsula Municipality, Cape Metropolitan Council, landowners and specialist consultant Bryan Davies of the University of Cape Town to contain the system as much as possible over the Christmas period.

"In the next couple of weeks, the vleis and lagoon will be monitored extensively to provide information for the best short-term solution, which may involve draining the vlei and increasing the salinity," Ms Wood explained this week.

"The solution is complex, as winter rains and cooler weather are some months away still. For example, raising the salinity of the vlei now could result in a bloom of different species of blue-green algae which are tolerant of salt water."

Longer term solutions to the problem were being investigated by consultants, Ms Wood said.

They have been appointed in terms of the Noordhoek Catchment Study, with a brief to develop management guidelines that will lead to a permanent solution for the entire Noordhoek wetlands, including the Wildevoëlvlei system.

The consultants have recommended that the eastern vlei should be dredged to remove the nutrient-rich sediment which has accumulated there.

"We see this as a vital step to rehabilitating Wildevoëlvlei and have started investigating methods and costs," Ms Wood said.

"Other catchment management actions may involve re-routing the stormwater drain from the nearby industrial areas to the waste-water treatment works.

"The CMC's upgrading of these works is due to be completed by August next year, and this will result in an improved quality of the water being discharged into the vlei in future."

Unless the medium- to long-term solutions were implemented, there would be continued risks of further toxic blooms, Ms Wood warned.

"The South Peninsula Municipality and the CMC are aware of the situation and are committed to implementing a permanent solution."

No rest for Oudekraal group

CT 22/12/98 (56)

DEREK ABDINOR

ALTHOUGH most Capetonians are taking time off during the festive season, the Oudekraal Crisis Coalition (OCC) is pulling in supporters from near and far in its campaign to prevent the development of the Oudekraal area.

The OCC, an executive branch of the Peninsula Mountain Forum (PMF), has as its focus the preservation of the Oudekraal area.

The campaign has brought together about 30 groups, including the Wildlife Society, Save Table Mountain Campaign and various land-owning interests.

"We're going beyond our limits now," said PMF board member Cecelia Assad.

"We're including different communities and we also have business interests on board."

The organisers intend to give the revitalised campaign more media coverage, which will include television documentaries.

The awareness campaign is directed at tourists and holiday-makers who would favour the preservation of the Peninsula mountain chain.

A design company has designed and produced pamphlets free of charge.

The pamphlets are being handed out — mostly on Victoria Road, just below Oudekraal — by a group of self-styled "eco-warriors".

Representatives of London's Reclaim The Streets group, while acknowledging the difference in terrain between London and Oudekraal, believe that the ideologies for and against development are the same.

"(People) are the cancer of the Earth," said member Boo Kiely.

"We must decide how to treat the organism so that both will survive."

Toxic algae poisoning vlei near Kommetjie

Staff shortages hamper monitoring

ARG 28/12/98 (56)

The recent spate of municipal workers opting for retrenchment packages is hampering scientific efforts to monitor the crisis at Wildevoëlvlei, near Kommetjie, where highly toxic blue-green algae has reappeared.

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Officials also confirmed there were several spills of raw sewage into the vlei from the overloaded and outdated sewerage works on an adjoining property earlier this year.

Treated effluent pumped for years into the vlei from the Cape Metropolitan Council-managed sewerage works has been one of the main causes of the vlei's ecological instability, and is a major factor in the blue-green algae problem.

Raw sewage adds significantly to this problem, as well as being a direct health threat.

The South Peninsula Municipality will probably post officials at nearby Kommetjie beach lagoon, which is connected to the vlei system and which also is possibly infected with toxic algae, during the holiday season to warn visitors to stay out of the water and also to answer questions.

However the municipality has pointed out that the sea and the nearby mussel beds have not been affected and are still considered safe.

University of Cape Town freshwater ecologist Bryan Davies, who is acting as a consultant to the municipality, said the latest outbreak of blue-green algae at Wildevoëlvlei was "not a happy situation".

He said that dealing with the issue was "really problematic, because the long and the short of it is that there is no quick fix."

The vlei was now "super-saturated" with nutrients such as phosphorous from the continued pumping of effluent, and he hoped consultants would be appointed soon to decide how to dredge the nutrient-enriched sediment from the bottom.

"I'm still not sure whether we will be able to dump that dredgeate (dredged material) safely, or whether it will have to go into an approved toxic waste landfill site," said Professor Davies.

There was also a problem with essential monitoring of the vlei and testing of the water.

Because of staff shortages in the scientific services branch of the CMC, tests were not being done as required.

"So, I don't have access to any data at this time," said Professor Davies.

The CMC's executive director of water and waste, Arthur Clayton, confirmed there was a temporary problem with water sampling and testing because of "quite a few" recent resignations, "but these will be resolved".

A more serious concern was a lack of capacity in the CMC to interpret the results of the tests after the recent resignation of senior scientist Bill Harding.

Mr Clayton confirmed there had been overflows of raw sewage from the sewerage works into Wildevoëlvlei during the year.

He confirmed that the most recent overflow had been about three months ago.

However, these overflows had been "of very short duration.

He said these overflows had lasted "plus-minus 10 minutes" before standby pumps had kicked in to deal with the problem.

Mr Clayton described the sewerage works as being "in a very poor state of repair" and also running at over-capacity.

That was why a R30-million upgrade, due to be completed in August, had been initiated.

The upgrading would include an overflow pond to prevent raw sewage entering the vlei, said Mr Clayton.

BRENTON GEACH

No-go area: warning signs have gone up again at Wildevoelvlei near Kommetjie following the bloom of poisonous blue-green algae

'Canal estate' plan for Thesen Island gets nod

But concerns remain about job losses if sawmill is moved to mainland

(56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

A controversial "canal-estate" development on historic Thesen Island in the Knysna lagoon has been given the go-ahead by Western Cape planning minister Michael Louis, subject to numerous conditions.

The conceptual development proposal includes dividing most of the island into 10 smaller residential islands separated by canals, and building 299 single houses, 241 group housing units, 120 apartment units, private and public open space, and shops, offices, an hotel and conference centre/eco-inn during a phased development.

Some of the existing industrial buildings on the island may be retained.

One of the requirements of the approval, given by Mr Louis two weeks ago, is for the proposed residential density to be reduced.

Another is for more usable open space than the amount mooted in the current development proposal.

Mr Louis's approval includes an amendment to the Knysna/Wilderness/Plettenberg Bay regional structure plan, and the rezoning and subdivision of the island.

Most of the 102ha island is owned by Thesen & Co, a wholly owned subsidiary of the giant Barlows group which in 1974 bought the sawmill and wood-processing factory on the island from the pioneering Thesen family.

The factory employs about 1 000 people and another 250 work in the surrounding area.

Maritime heritage: the boat shed where some famous racing yachts were built

The company is the single biggest employer in Knysna, and directly employs about 8% of the town's labour force of some 16 000, according to a CSIR-compiled Environmental Impact Report.

When proposals for Thesen Island were mooted in the early 1990s, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Cape Nature Conservation and SA National Parks jointly opposed any further development while the factory remained.

They argued that the industrial zoning of the island was wrong and that the factory posed a potential pollution hazard to the entire Knysna estuary.

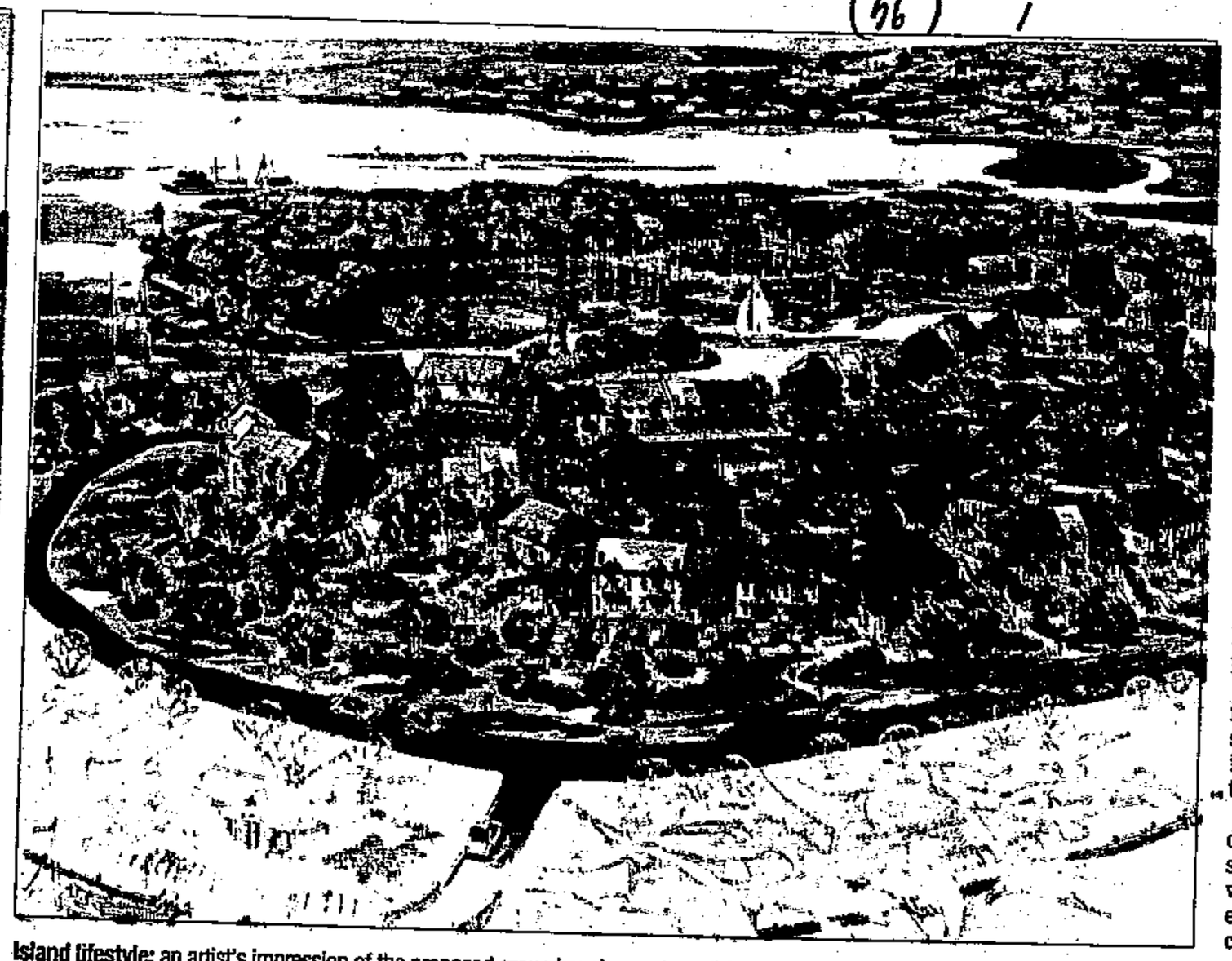
The timber company indicated it was prepared to consider relocating the entire factory from the island to the mainland, subject to the sale of the property at a viable price and a suitable alternative site being found.

According to one of the specialist reports done as part of the 1996 Environmental Impact Assessment of various development scenarios for the island, moving the factory to the mainland could result in about 150 job losses.

Also, because of the high cost of relocating, one or more of the factory's production sections – sawmill, poleyard or plywood production – could be closed down completely, with a total job loss of about 460.

This has been one of the major concerns of environmentalists monitoring the development proposals.

In terms of the provincial government's approval, an environmental management plan for the development must be prepared parallel with the detailed design and planning phase.



Island lifestyle: an artist's impression of the proposed group housing and small-boat harbour on Thesen Island

The plan must be applied during the detailed design and construction phases and when the development is operational – including the management of the highly sensitive salt-marshes and the intertidal zone around the island.

An environmental management committee – to include Knysna's chief town planner and representatives of SA National Parks, Ca Nature Conservation, the Knys Environmental Forum and t National Monuments Council – mu be appointed before any constru tion work starts, to ensure effecti environmental management of t project.

The committee will be empo ered to order anyone connected wi the project to take appropriate ste to "eliminate, reduce or prevent se ous damage to, or a serious deti mental effect on, the environment"

The Knysna municipality w have the right to stop constructi and/or any earthworks if the co mittee indicates that the developer not sticking to agreed environme tal requirements.

According to a specialist repo on the built heritage resources of tl island, there is a "rich industri legacy" including a wood waste-fire power station.

"Despite being little more than mud-flat in the Knysna Lagoon, Th sen Island has played a central ro in the development of the town sinc the last century," the report states.

"In the case of the power statior demolition and the scrapping of th structure, and the unique machiner within, cannot be adequately mitiga ed as this represents an excellent edu cational and tourism opportunity ...

"Conservation of the power sta tion, if handled correctly, will be a enormous educational asset.

"From the tourism point of view this will complement Knysna' already established steam locomo tive route which attracts enthusiast from around the world."

Scramble to launch euro

PD 30/12/98 (56)

BRUSSELS — Across Europe the talk is of war rooms, secure telephones and emergency rations, but while the preparations may feel military, the purpose is peaceful: to launch the euro, the new single currency, on January 1.

Tens of thousands of bank staff across Europe will be curtailing traditional New Year celebrations this weekend, as they prepare for the first day of trading in the new currency on Monday, and the expected shock-waves from the unprecedented simultaneous conversion of 11 currencies. All the world's main financial centres will be affected.

Big banks have established war rooms to manage the changeover and European Union central bank governors will have to be within an hour of a secure telephone over the weekend to deal with any emergency.

"It sounds somewhat dramatic. It is not meant to be. I think we are adequately prepared but we also have to be prepared for the eventuality that something, somewhere can go wrong," said Wim Duisenberg, president of the European Central Bank, which has full responsibility for monetary policy in the euro-zone.

The publication of a full set of official conversion rates on New Year's Eve will mark the start of a frantic 100-hour race to convert cash balances, redenominate bond and derivative portfolios and make the final changes to computers.

Although Britain will not be a founder member of the European single currency, much activity will centre on the City of London, the largest currency trading centre in Europe. About 30 000 information technology specialists and back-office staff are expected to be working in the financial district over the New Year weekend. Special transport, catering and accommodation is being laid on for employees.

Paul Cantwell, partner with Andersen Consulting, said: "Getting ready for the euro has been the biggest single operation ever undertaken by London's financial sector, dwarfing even Big Bang financial sector deregulation in the 1980s."

He says even small mistakes in the way programs and processes are adapted for the euro could generate big losses given the sums of money involved. Given the size and complexity of all this, it is the corporate equivalent of doing a full engine overhaul during a 10-second Grand Prix pit stop.

Preparations for the weekend have been under way for months at the European Central Bank and at national central banks.

For the European Central Bank, the main concern is to ensure that all the outstanding public debt of the 11 euro-zone countries is successfully redenominated over the weekend because this will serve as the collateral for the monetary operations that will have to be executed by the central bank from January 4.

The European Central Bank has set up a working group of specialists known as the changeover committee, which includes three people from each central bank. Changeover working groups will be on the spot in the national central banks of all 11 euro-zone countries over the weekend.

The central bank is prepared in case decisions need to be taken at the level of its executive board and secure telephones will be used if a decision is required from the bank's governing council. — Financial Times.

Financial director quits parks board post

BD 30/12/98 (56)

NELSPRUIT — The financial director of the Mpumalanga Parks Board, Nico Krugel, has resigned from the parastatal in what is seen as an apparent attempt to sidestep threatened disciplinary action.

Krugel was suspended from his post two months ago after he admitted that he had illegally channelled parks board funds to local politicians through a secret White River bank account and front company.

Leaked bank records show that Krugel processed at least R902 982 through an account registered in the name of his own construction company, Phambili.

The records also show that Phambili paid R105 000 to the African National Congress Youth League, R70 000 to its provincial secretary James Nkambule and R110 000 to suspended parks board CE Alan Gray. Gray's helicopter charter company, Air Excellence, was paid R429 000, while the parks board's accountant, Maxi Green, was paid R67 000.

The ANC Youth League confirmed that its provincial organiser, Mandla Thumbati, was seconded to Phambili to ensure that the party's interests were protected.

Krugel has repeatedly refused to comment on the payments or on Phambili, but he admitted setting up the firm as a front company during interrogation by Judge Willem Heath's special investigative unit.

Heath is investigating Krugel for his role in the scheme and his involvement in the issue of six illegal promissory notes worth R1,3-bn.

The promissory notes used 31 provincial game reserves as collateral and were secretly issued to a number of financial brokers in return for offshore loans of between R300m and R500m each.

Parks board spokesman Gary Sutter confirmed on Monday that Krugel had tendered his letter of resignation two weeks ago and would leave the parastatal by the end of January.

Sutter was unable to say how the move would affect the pending disciplinary action against Krugel, but he confirmed that the parks board had accepted Krugel's resignation. Krugel's letter of resignation gave no reasons for his leaving the parks board. — AENS.

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