

Wildlife expert spurns Knysna jumbos

Own Correspondent
CAPE TOWN. — Mr Keith Cooper, director of conservation for the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa, has queried the relevancy of preserving the four remaining Knysna elephants.

Conservation had entered a new era where it was wasteful and self-indulgent to concentrate on a few individual species, he said.

“People have over-reacted about the elephants, which are now almost certainly too few to survive. They are just one small part of the total Knysna forest system.

“Conservationists and the public would do far better to concern themselves with the whole forest which has more than 1 000 species of plants, insects and animals.”

Mr Cooper said it must be accepted that certain species would become extinct and while it would be very sad to see the Knysna elephants die out — “and I personally doubt whether they can survive, fencing or no fencing” — one had to take a long-term strategic view of conservation.

South Africa was faced with a doubling of its population in the next 25 years — to about 56 million.

“There will be heavy demands on natural resources and an urgent need for food. A national conservation strategy is needed to check destruction of resources and to initiate programmes to replenish diminishing stocks.”

Mr Robert Allen, policy adviser to the International Union of Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), who flew from Switzerland to be present at the launching earlier this week of the Wildlife Society's national conservation strategy, said conservation had made a radical switch from its old ideas of saving single species and the “big, the hairy and the cuddly”.

It was now realised that conservation was about people, not cuddly animals.

“The central message of new conservation strategy is the inter-dependence of conservation and development. The main aim is to integrate the two so they are mutually supportive and to strengthen the country's capacity to conserve its living resources.” Mr Allen said.

Resources in rural areas were being destroyed, not through greed or ignorance, but because people had no choice.

“They are compelled by poverty, population growth and unequal land distribution to undermine their means of survival still further by over-cultivating, overgrazing, over-hunting and overcutting for fuel.

“The only cure for this disastrous situation is rural development.” Mr Allen said. An infrastructure to provide and develop small-scale adaptable industry, appropriate technologies and agricultural training at rural level was essential.

Restrictions on Press now 'critical'

By CHRIS FREIMOND

RESTRICTIVE measures against the South African Press had reached “critical proportions”, the editor of The Star, Mr Harvey Tyson, said yesterday.

Giving evidence before the Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the mass media in Johannesburg, Mr Tyson asked it to reject sectional and self-interest-oriented calls for more media control.

What was needed was a re-establishment of trust and co-operation between State officials and the Press, he said.

A tradition of mistrust between the Press and the bureaucracy had followed the National Party's election win in 1948. Today, most officials below heads of departments were still afraid of talking to the Press because of the possible repercussions.

Mr Tyson rejected proposals by some State departments that an official body be established to collect and disseminate information to the media.

This system was one of the “most misleading” forms of communication, and would result in officials being shielded from questioning by the Press. Information would tend to fit a pattern, become propagandistic, and lose credibility.

It would also prevent the “very healthy” interchange of communication between officials and reporters. He appealed for an “opening up” of communication channels instead.

Referring to complaints that newspapers kept certain issues alive — such as the Biko affair — Mr Tyson said he believed it was the right of any newspaper to take up a cause within the law and the bounds of common good.

In the Biko case there were many ramifications and issues of public importance “all the way through”, and even today it was still newsworthy.

In reply to a submission by a commission member, Mr Klaus von Lieres, that a problem of the commission would have to deal with ultimately would be the moderation newspapers should show in pressing causes to prevent the situation “blowing up”, Mr Tyson said he believed it was better for an issue to be aired in public than for it to be forced underground.

It was wiser in the long term to allow views to be propagated in print, he said. Suppressing reports of bad news would not solve problems, but would probably aggravate them and cause newspapers to lose credibility with some readers.

Another witness, Major Allen Ryan, a former New Republic Party candidate in the Johannesburg North constituency, strongly attacked the “monopolistic” newspapers in the SAAN and Argus groups.

He claimed that it was “common knowledge” that Mr Harry Oppenheimer “was the power behind the ‘mo.’”, and alleged that Mr Oppenheimer influenced the appointment of editors and the formulation of editorial policy.

Newspapers of the two groups played a “divisive” role in South African affairs. They had destroyed the old United Party, and were showing “recklessness” that threatened to undermine morale at a time when the country faced a serious threat.

The English-language Press had been instrumental in distorting the “true picture” in South Africa, he claimed.

He accused newspapers of “digging up dirt” by commemorating incidents such as the Sharville shootings and the 1976 Soweto unrest.

The Press which supported the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) seemed to be more sympathetic to “terrorist” causes than to South Africa's own military forces, he said.

The “monopolistic Press” could not deny its role in supporting calls by black nationalists for majority rule in South Africa, he claimed.

Referring to an analysis by Mr Joel Mervis — MFC and former editor of the Sunday Times — of reporting in the Rand Daily Mail of the Biko case, Major Ryan described Mr Mervis as “an active supporter” of a political party (the PFP) which was bent on the “overthrow of orderly government in South Africa”.

Evidence from the Association of Law Societies will be heard on Monday.

Latest Biko inquiry comes under fire

By MARTIN FEINSTEIN

A PLANNED Medical Association of South Africa (Masa) inquiry into the ethical issues stemming from the death in detention of Mr Steve Biko has come under sharp attack from the University of the Witwatersrand's medical faculty.

The executive committee of the faculty board says it “has no faith” in the Masa inquiry because of its restricted terms of reference.

The committee met last week to discuss the recent decision by Masa to ask its ethical committee to make recommendations on the ethical issues raised by Mr Biko's medical treatment.

In a hard-hitting statement — issued yesterday by Professor Phillip Tobias, dean of medicine — the faculty said: “We consider that the new move of Masa is not adequate to resolve fundamental problems of the handling of the case.”

“The executive committee notes that the proposed Masa inquiry will not be an inquiry into the Biko case, but rather into the ethical issues and implications for the future.”

“While this is an important aspect of the Biko case, it will by no means satisfy the faculty's concern with the handling of the Biko case itself and with the findings by the Medical and Dental Council on the behaviour of the two district surgeons concerned,” the statement said.

The doctors who treated Mr Biko were Drs Ivor Lang, Colin Hersch and Benjamin Tucker.

Prof Tobias said the faculty remained deeply concerned that several “openly admitted departures” from accepted medical procedure had occurred in the handling of Mr Biko by the doctors.

These included:

- The issuing of a false certificate.
- The recording of incorrect information about Mr Biko in the prison hospital bedsheet, and the passing of incorrect information to Mr Biko about the findings of Dr Hersch's examination.
- Mr Biko's trip in a police vehicle to Pretoria.

“It is a matter for adverse comment that the patient was permitted to travel to Pretoria at all and, further, that no trained medical personnel nor written medical report accompanied Mr Biko on the journey.”

Prof Tobias said the faculty was also “deeply distressed” that a district surgeon had “accepted without apparent demur” the decision of a security officer that Mr Biko should not be moved to a civilian hospital.

This allowed the interests of the patient to be subordinated to those of the security police, he said.

“We remain perplexed as to how the medical committee of preliminary inquiry of the Medical Council could reach a finding that there was no prima facie case to be answered, when the facts revealed before the Chief Magistrate of Pretoria had led him and the two medical assessors ... to conclude that there was prima facie proof of improper or disgraceful conduct and that an inquiry was therefore obviously necessary and desirable.”

There were further reasons for doubting whether the Masa probe would effectively “bring the whole truth to light”.

Masa's federal council, for example, had only requested its ethical committee to “give consideration” to “holding public proceedings.”

“We consider that the proceedings ... may be seriously restricted by the fear of litigation. Such an inquiry would not have the status of a court of law and evidence would therefore not be privileged.”

“Speculations on the actions of the district surgeons or the Security Police ... might only too readily lead to legal actions for damages.”

This fear, as well as the fact that the inquiry would have no power to subpoena witnesses, could inhibit the full and free revelation and evaluation of the evidence, he said.

The faculty also expressed “grave doubts” about Masa's ability to fulfil an effective role regarding ethical problems such as those raised by the Biko case, and suggested that an independent national organisation of concerned doctors be set up to act as a “watchdog”.

FOOTNOTE: The faculty executive has resolved to call a mass meeting of all medical school staff “as soon after the summer vacation as possible” to discuss the issue.

'UNCLE BUCK' RIDES AGAIN



Cameron "Uncle Buck" Mitchell rode again yesterday at Germiston Racecourse — on nine-year-old Jamie, a retired racehorse. Mitchell will be one of the racegoers at the R100 000 Sigma Classic meeting today.

'Nats are not on the path of change'

By ARNOLD GEYER

SOUTH Africans were justified in believing the Nationalist Government could not bring about fundamental change in the country as Afrikanerdom refused to touch the basic tenets of apartheid, according to the Black Sash's official magazine.

In the latest issue of Sash, Mrs Jeanette Cohen, a committee member, spelt out the discrepancies between Government promises and actualities.

Despite the optimism aroused by the Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, and other top Government officials, people had the right to be sceptical when “Mr Botha and his henchmen” repeatedly affirmed their belief in apartheid, she said.

There was no argument in Afrikanerdom over points of view such as:

- The importance of identity, ethnicity and self-preservation of all population groups as well as the maintenance of group interests and a say over their own affairs.
- The rejection of a unitary state, political integration and the inclusion of black people in a federal government.
- The protection of separate group areas, schools, facilities, services and institutions.

“The basic tenets of apartheid had not been touched so that we are justified in our disbelief in essential change,” Mrs Cohen said.

“People would be happier if changes were entrenched in the law and not made by granting exemptions which could be granted by the ‘whims and moods’ of individuals and withdrawn equally easily, the article said.

“The opening of restaurants etc. are the single swallows which don't make a summer. We'll be happy to see the swallows swarming.”

Mrs Cohen said Mr Botha had not amended much in the statute books, which entrenched apartheid, but had instituted certain reforms by exemption.

Turning to specific areas of concern in South Africa, she criticised the Government for its policies on housing, forced population removals, group areas, employment and wages, health, environmental planning, education and defence.

Despite “bold” statements by Cabinet Ministers, no real solutions had been offered to the housing backlog of the mass of the black population, no changes made to the Group Areas Act, and the big wage gap between whites and blacks persisted.

The article said very few black doctors had qualified, white medical schools were still not open to blacks — except by exemption — and more facilities were being provided for whites than for blacks.

In terms of the Environmental Planning Act, a limit was imposed on the number of Africans that could be employed in the main industrial areas — the employer thus being penalised instead of encouraged to increase his work force.

Black teachers were still paid about R150 a month less than their white colleagues — parity would cost the State about R25-million.

And three years ago the Government spent R866-million on white education, as opposed to R452-million on black education.

'Formula for a fair economy'

CAPE TOWN. — The chairman of the Economic Standing Committee of the President's Council, Dr Schalk van der Merwe, said yesterday a major task of the committee would be the development of a formula for an economy that was fair to all.

Dr Van der Merwe, who is also deputy chairman of the President's Council, was addressing a Press conference in Cape Town.

He said such an economic strategy would seek the achievement of a healthy growth rate, full employment, price stability, protection of the economy from outside pressure, fair income, improved social and welfare benefits, maintenance of industrial peace, increased productivity and a strong monetary policy.

He said the committee would look into the question of why there had not been equitable sharing of economic benefits in the past between all population groups.

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Media strike questioned

By CHRIS FREIMOND

THE freedom of the Press was threatened as much by striking journalists as by the possibility of further restrictive statutory curbs.

That is the view of the chairman of the Steyn Commission of Inquiry into the mass media, Mr Justice M T Steyn.

While hearing evidence from the editor of The Star, Mr Harvey Tyson, Judge Steyn suggested that it was “distressing” that journalists were not only split among themselves, but by striking were stopping the publication of some newspapers.

He was referring to the split from the South African Society of Journalists (SASJ) of black reporters who formed the Media Workers Association of South Africa (Mwasa). A lengthy strike by Mwasa members has stopped publication of the black-oriented Argus newspaper Post (Transvaal).

He questioned whether there was a difference between a newspaper being closed by striking journalists or by Government action. When publication of a paper was stopped, the public's right to information was curtailed.

Judge Steyn asked if the Mwasa strike was not the result of a lack of discipline and dedication to professional duty.

Mr Tyson replied that the “professionalisation” of journalism and the creation of a statutory body to regulate the profession would not necessarily alter the current position.

The judge said he believed such a body could possibly prevent a strike by being able to intervene “at a higher level” (with the newspaper owners) before there was strike action.

Sinkholes hit Natal road as visitors go south

Own Correspondent
MARITZBURG. — Traffic officers have been assigned to keep a round-the-clock watch on Town Hill's notorious death stretch sinkhole spot until testing is resumed on Monday.

A third sinkhole uncovered on Thursday, it was expected, would have been filled by late last night.

Meanwhile, the holiday surge of visitors from up-country to the sea began yesterday, with a peak lunch-time traffic count of 1 650 cars an hour passing Hillton.

It is hoped the introduction of an extra dozen traffic inspectors, who passed out after their training course yesterday, will help alleviate the shortage at present experienced by traffic departments throughout Natal, a senior traffic official said.

The 11 new men inspectors and lone woman inspector will be posted to Pinetown, Maritzburg, Eastcourt, Ladysmith, Greytown, Empangeni, Stanger and Vryheid.

Help to fight malnutrition

FIFTY per cent of all two to three-year-old children in the Ciskei were malnourished, the director of the South African Institute of Race Relations, Mr John Rees, said in a statement in Johannesburg yesterday.

He said a survey conducted in 1978 and just released by the Ciskei Department of Health showed that three out of four urban and more than eight out of 10 rural children were also malnourished.

In the two to three-year-old group, one in 10 urban and one in six rural children suffered from malnutrition diseases such as kwashiorkor and marasmus (wasting of the body).

Mr Rees said infant mortality figures per 1 000 live births in South Africa were 12 whites, 69 urban blacks and 240 rural blacks, which gave an average of 117. In Niger the deaths were 200, Zaire 160, Botswana 97, United Kingdom 16, and Sweden 9.

The institute's Operation Hunger scheme had collected about R90 000 which had been sent to the Red Cross for feeding people in KwaZulu, and for feeding and self-help projects in the Ciskei.

Feeding schemes at a school and two clinics had also been started in Venda and Lebowa.

A church group had also appealed for help in resettlement villages in the KwaNdebele homeland near Groblersdal.

The institute appeals to the public for contributions and anyone prepared to get involved with Operation Hunger should contact Ina Perlman at 724-4441 in Johannesburg. — Sapa.

Woman, 70, classed coloured, was white

DURBAN. — Senator Warwick Webber, Natal leader of the New Republic Party, has appealed to the Prime Minister against the reclassification from white to coloured of a 70-year-old Durban woman, her children and grandchildren.

He said the woman, who has asked that her identity be kept secret, had declined to appeal to the Department of Interior against the reclassification because of the embarrassment the ensuing investigation would bring.

In terms of the Registration Act, people reclassified may appeal to the Secretary for the Interior, who then sets in motion an investigation to establish if they are accepted in the community in which they live.

Sen Webber said the woman's daughter had received a card notifying her that she had been reclassified coloured.

“She panicked and burst it, she didn't tell anyone because she was afraid of the stigma. Everything went fine until her children wanted to get married. They needed identity documents,” he said.

“This woman's son went to a Catholic white school, did his national service as a white and represented South Africa before Springbok colours were awarded to non-whites.”

He is now a company manager with whites working under him. He is married — “by religion, but not by law” — and all his son's friends are whites. — Sapa.

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Mandrax case is postponed

Pretoria Bureau

A MANDRAX case involving three Johannesburg men was postponed for the second time in the Pretoria Magistrate's Court yesterday.

The case was first postponed on October 16 by the magistrate, Mr B J O van Schalkwyk, who issued a warrant for the arrest of one of the accused, Mr Leebom York, 23, of Bosmont, for failing to appear in court.

Mr Van Schalkwyk also ordered that Mr York forfeit bail of R1 000.

Mr York was not present in court yesterday and the case was postponed to January 14.

Mr York, his brother, Mr David York, 32, and Mr Yunus Ebrahim, 27, have pleaded not guilty to dealing in Mandrax tablets.

The State alleges the three men were found in possession of Mandrax tablets in Laudium, near Pretoria, in April this year.

They were arrested while allegedly bargaining with police over the price of the tablets.

Bail for Mr Ebrahim and Mr David York was extended on condition they report to the police once in a fortnight.

Third Party inquiry

THE Minister of Transport Affairs, Mr Hendrik Schoeman, intends to appoint a commission of inquiry into certain aspects affecting third party insurance.

Speaking at a banquet in Johannesburg last night to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Automobile Association of South Africa, Mr Schoeman said he would like to have the following aspects investigated:

- The composition of the consortium, to determine whether it should be limited to the present 16 members or if other insurers should be given an opportunity to become members.
- If it was desirable that balance of third party insurance should be made compulsory, and
- If it was desirable that the so-called “no fault” insurance should be made applicable and compulsory. — Sapa.

Bomb thrown at varsity lecturer

PORT ELIZABETH. — A Rhodes University sociology lecturer, Mr Richard de Villiers, said yesterday he thought a Rightwing political organisation was responsible for tossing burning explosives into the home of Miss Jacklyn Cock, a fellow lecturer, on Thursday night.

Mr De Villiers and a friend, Mrs Ingrid Swartz, were having supper with Miss Cock in her home when three sticks of dynamite with a burning fuse were tossed through the dining room window.

The explosives landed about three metres from where she and her guests were sitting.

Mr De Villiers and the two women rushed from the room into the street. Police, fearing an explosion, evacuated surrounding homes.

“I think a Rightwing group was responsible for the attack. They tried to kill Miss Cock. She antagonised some of the population with her book, ‘Maids and Madams,’” he said.

Mr De Villiers said it would be fruitless for Miss Cock, who had received threatening telephone calls, to take precautionary measures.

“If they are going to get you, they are going to get you,” he said.

Miss Cock left Grahamstown on holiday yesterday.

Brigadier Izak van Niekerk said a bomb disposal expert defused the explosives while the attached fuse was still burning. — Sapa.

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