

SOUTHERN AFRICA REPORT

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The Editor
Sunday Star
Sauer Street
2000 Johannesburg

Dear Sir,

Is there no end to the smearing of the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting by your TV columnist Ian Gray? On several occasions last year we had to correct his enthusiasm for denigrating our activities and our motives because of his insistence on gleaning inaccurate information about us from the SABC and then rushing into print with it without making the customary elementary checks by calling us.

His column in the July 18 edition - Will there be a big stick for independents? - is the latest vehicle for his misinformed attacks on us.

He asks who will be responsible for the "political policing" of the independent radio and TV stations which will receive licences when the new Independent Broadcasting Authority is set up and goes on to suggest that "the big stick" will be waved over other issues such as the stations' content of serious or pop music, etc. He answers by posing yet another question: The CIB? The addition of the question mark is designed to legitimise the smear while leaving it hanging, as it were, in the air (and in the minds of readers).

Well, the answer is, No, the CIB is not going to do that. Gray should know the CIB has had nothing to do with the monitoring of broadcasts that has taken place in the last year. The monitoring programme was started by the Campaign for Open Media which was mandated to do that by the Free, Fair and Open conference at the University of the Western Cape in January/February last year.

Since then the monitoring project has been hived off from the Campaign for Open Media and re-formed under a separate, independent board of management under the title of the Broadcast Monitoring Project, the launch of which was reported in The Star a few weeks back.

Incidentally, there is little chance of independent homes being up and running before the election, but even if stations did start up before then, it would not be the CIB which would monitor their performance but the Independent Media Commission which the Multiparty Forum at the World Trade Centre is about to set up. That commission, however, will be focussed mainly on the public broadcaster, the SA Broadcasting Corporation, to ensure