

Member of the South African Audit Bureau of Circulations

# SOWETAN

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4th October, 1990.

Mr. Raymond Louw,  
Campaign for Open Media,  
P.O. Box 260425,  
EXCOM,  
2023

Dear Ray,

I have read the document you sent me with extreme interest. My sentiments regarding the SABC are, I am sure, well known to you.

For many years there were attempts to have me, and I am sure many more important voices, onto radio and television programmes. For many years I have resisted, out of principle.

My refusal was in many instances quite painful because I often felt the type of views that were flouted on this media were not only straight-forward propaganda, but that they were detrimental to journalism and more importantly to this country's future. I have been pained by the type of people who were paraded on the electronic media for the sole purpose of serving the Government's policies. This has happened for many years and the damage done, let's face it, is great.

The temptation to break the boycott personally was great. I held out till last year. I had been approached to discuss the education crisis with Minister Stoffel van der Merwe and while I instinctively said no, I later changed my mind. I just felt I was doing everybody an injustice by not having another point of view about this serious matter. The education crisis touches me both as a parent and as a South African.

I am glad to see that many more people, from all sectors of the community as well as political leadership, are appearing on television and radio today. The number of people with political credibility doing this, particularly after the ANC/government initiatives is large and interesting.

I have in the last few weeks involved Sowetan in helping matriculants to re-do matriculation, write and pass the examinations. This happened after approaches had been made to us by pupils and their parents about two years ago. Today we have over a thousand matriculants re-writing matric at our school at Wits.

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This has led me to other initiatives to use television as a national avenue to teach our children. I have battled, first to get some revision lessons on the Box (these will be shown later this month and repeated in Argus newspapers), and secondly to get more clout in using this powerful media for what I believe are the right things. I am afraid I do not believe it serves my purpose, and more importantly the future of our children, to wait for some future dispensation before this is done.

I am as bothered about the composition of the Task Force as you are. My feeling though is we must not allow these people to do things over and above our heads - a thing that has been happening alas, for over 40 years. We will be forced to inherit too many messy things from them. That inheritance becomes more difficult the longer we absent ourselves from areas that will need our input and eventually our joint control in future.

If you consider the type of things I have been saying editorially, I am convinced that we should get as much knowledge, as much information, as much power, about structures that underpin the political, economic and social systems of South Africa as expeditiously and hopefully as wisely as we can.

I do not know what the future government will look like. I have no doubt that it will have a significant number of blacks, the majority of the population, in it. I believe it makes sense for us to try and get a foot into some of the more sensitive power structures sooner than later.

What convinced me about some involvement in the electronic media, among many other things, is what they are doing out there in Auckland Park. It seems to me with the FW de Klerk regime, there is most certainly a shake-up in the system. I fear though that they have very little information about the type of things that irk us, the type of things important to us, the type of thing that could help develop this country. I have very serious views about that.

The critical area I have touched on, is education. I have fought hard to get credible lessons on television. It took close to six months to get the OK. We were made to run from one bureaucracy to the other, for reasons that were patently political.

When we eventually cracked part of the problem, the government deliberately started their own "revision lessons" on television. Their efforts are ridiculous, very expensive (tax-payers' money), amateurish. Our efforts will not only serve this important area but will show up the government's mediocrity.

Mr.R. Louw  
Campaign for Open Media

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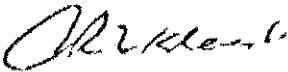
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Finally I suspect that my inclusion on the Task Force could be a ploy by the Government to save face. I know though that my seniors in the Argus Group and in the NPU have been fighting to have proper representation on the Task Force. This has now been successful, although just the start. The challenge for me is to guard against being manipulated. The challenge furthermore is to create the space for a minority position emerging from the Task Force. I am confident that my inclusion will open the door to others, something I will have to fight for.

I do not expect this to be easy, for reasons that you are aware of.

Thank you for sending me the material on your efforts to keep the media open.

Sincerely,



AGGREY KLAASTE