

Recommendations

The Media Environment

FACILITATING CHANGE:

Infrastructure and Empowerment

In the analysis by the Task Group into the Media Environment a number of steps that could be taken by government were identified.

FUNDING AND RESOURCES FOR THE NATIONAL PUBLIC BROADCASTER

Reference was made in the above chapter of the need for Parliament to adopt a triennial arrangement for the funding of the public broadcaster.

It appears that in 1996 the resolution of Parliament in this regard was not complied with and the public broadcaster had to seek interim funding from government. This is not a desirable state of affairs because the structured triennial budgeting process is designed to limit political interference in public broadcasting.

Such funding was required to extend the footprint of broadcasting networks to rural areas and for the funding of public service aspects of the National Public Broadcaster, such as educational and RDP programmes.

It is essential that the National Public Broadcaster has secure funding to perform its role and so that planning and strategising can take place without uncertainty.

It is therefore specifically proposed that the recommended Cabinet Committee on the Information Economy, if instituted, should place this item high on its agenda for resolution. Parliament should do likewise.

Recommendation 77

It is recommended that the recommended Cabinet Committee on the Information Economy place the issue of funding for the SABC high on its agenda for resolution. Parliament should do likewise.

RESOURCES AND FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA

We recommend that recognition should be given by government to the Independent Media Diversity Trust as the interim funding administration agency for this sector.

There is evidence of tremendous international donor interest in the community radio sector. The Danish Government concluded a funding arrangement for community radio on a rand-for-rand basis with the government, which arrangement has proved successful for the community media sector.

It is accordingly recommended that government match the funds provided by international donors for community media on a rand for rand basis.

It is further recommended that government facilitate the process of setting up a statutorily recognised media development agency comprised of independently elected trustees, which agency will operate a statutorily recognised subsidy system for community and independent media in South Africa.

Recommendation 78

It is recommended that government match the funds provided by donors for community media on a rand-for-rand basis.

Recommendation 79

It is proposed that government facilitate the process of setting up a statutorily recognised media development agency for the dispensing of subsidies to this sector.

CHANNEL AFRICA

The provision of information on South Africa to the continent is important to the long term goal of building democracy and prosperity, and to the advancement of South Africa's national values, trade and commercial interests. While this is widely recognised as a national interest, it is not one that falls within the mandate and responsibilities of the national public broadcaster.

In line with the way in which similar international broadcast stations are funded in other countries, we recommend that the funding of Channel Africa be resumed.

It is therefore proposed that funding be made available through Department of Foreign Affairs, in order to keep Channel Africa on the air.

Recommendation 80

It is recommended that the funding of Channel Africa be provided through the Department of Foreign Affairs, in order to reinstate the ultimate value of Channel Africa.

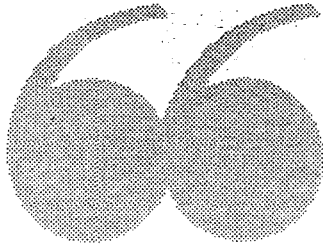
MEDIA DIVERSITY

It emerged from the survey on ownership and control of the print media in South Africa that there are entrenched anti-competitive and restrictive practices that exist within the industry.

The strongest element of the legacy of monopolistic control in this sector is in the area of distribution. Both Nasionale Pers and Allied Publishing have indicated to the Task Group that they would be amenable to a restructuring of the two distribution monopolies along the lines of common carrier provisions being imposed upon a centrally co-ordinated distributor.

Although we have made findings to the effect that the monopolistic practices within the industry should be referred to the competitions board, and to the Task Group which is drawing up anti-trust law for South Africa, there is a need for a specific recommendation in this regard.

It is proposed that the existing distributors of mass market newspapers in South Africa be licenced with common carrier status in terms of legislation that would require distributors to give fair and equitable treatment to all newspapers and periodicals that require their products to be distributed.



Recommendation B1

It is proposed that the overall question of monopolies within the print media industry be referred to the Competitions Board and be dealt with under the broad policy framework of competitions policy.

Recommendation B2

It is proposed that the existing distributors of mass market newspapers in South Africa be licenced with common carrier status in terms of legislation that would require distributors to give fair and equitable treatment to all newspapers and periodicals that require their products to be distributed.

The C-Span service in the United States and similar services in other countries provides unedited accounts of parliamentary debates, committee meetings and inquiries and similar proceedings to TV audiences. It enables the public to view important government activity without an editorial filtering process through a correspondent or a reporter. Once the system has been established it becomes a relatively low-cost operation involving camera and sound crews and a transmission feed. It is proposed that such a system be investigated for broadcast by the SABC preferably by satellite.

Recommendation B3

It is proposed that parliament institute an investigation of a C-Span type parliamentary TV service for South Africa to be conducted by the SABC with appropriate funding appropriations and via satellite.