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10 Carlyn Mansions
Myrtle St
8001 Oranjezicht
9th December 1993

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The Chairman
KP Negotiating Forum or as relevant

PROTEST AT NON-DEMOCRATIC ACTIVITY

Sirs,

This is a protest at the hypocrisy and dishonesty prevalent in the Press. It is total hypocrisy to beat the drum piously for "Freedom of Speech" and "Freedom of Expression" and totally meaningless too. Anybody can say what he likes and how he likes, and that's freedom of speech and freedom of expression. So what! Likewise, anybody has freedom to be heard - if anyone's listening. These are all contrived deceptions. The important[^] is freedom of publication: freedom to be heard via the Press.

I have views on this and that and I have as much right to have them published as does the State President or anyone else. What's all this elitism?

When I write letter after letter after letter on some aspect of government to the Press, which just suppresses them time and time again, That's not true freedom of speech, or of expression, or impartiality, or democracy. The ONLY reason why my political letters get suppressed time and time again is because they have punch and the Press is slanted, and those letters are slanted the 'wrong' way. The Press is scared they may upset some cosy applecart!

The Press has no right being slanted. That's corruption. It's probably a brand-new thought, but the Press is supposed to be TRUTHFUL. It's purpose is to convey factual information to the public. Politically it should be neutral.

It's because it violates all these requirements that it gets periodically into trouble and that IS the reason why its sales have been steadily falling. People in the main are not that stupid.

The Press should not run some party political campaign of its own and as it does, blatantly, it gets to be recognized not so much as a NEWS paper as a party political propaganda newsletter. Ask around if you don't believe me.

This activity is a degradation of the Press and attempted 'govt by newspaper', not democracy; govt by 'expert' correspondents, not by the people. Freedom of the Press has come to mean freedom to publish what IT wants by whom IT wants and to suppress what and whom it doesn't want heard.

My appeal is: let's get some integrity back into the Press. I suggest some type of ombudsman council be set up, entirely independent of the Press, not a body set up, elected and paid by the Press. Its prime purpose should be to ensure the integrity and impartiality of the media and should deal with any aspect and not have 'certain issues' excluded. It should also have the necessary teeth.

Yours faithfully

R. Pentecost

Newsflash: It is a sorry day for SA when such blatant lies can be asserted, whether by the new SABC Board or other body, that the SABC news has been "found" to be Govt biased; this in order to cause it to be yet more biased in the opposite direction, which it obviously is. Let's have plain truth in broadcasting too.