

# EDITORIAL / REDAKSIONEEL

The 1990s have seen the ending of apartheid, South Africa's first one-person-one-vote elections and the inauguration of the country's first black State President. At first glance these seem momentous changes. Yet the extent to which really significant change has actually taken place in South Africa's communication environment is a moot point. Post-election South Africa has inherited a great deal of onerous baggage from the pre-election era which continues to distort communication in our society. The Election/Inauguration signalled, at best, the start of a change-process, not change itself. If there is a common thread to each of the articles in this issue, it is that change is a process, not an event. And South Africa has a long road to travel yet.

Building a democratic society and open media system will be a lengthy process. Communication practitioners and theoreticians each have a role to play in re-moulding South Africa's media as part of a wider re-building exercise. In this regard, a number of warning flags, or challenges, are raised in this issue. Some of these deserve highlighting:

South African journalism has been severely damaged. There is a strong tradition of obsequious "ja meneer die Minister" journalism which will somehow have to be overcome.

A real danger exists that the emergent nation-building ideology could ultimately translate into pressures for interpreting any future criticism of the government as an "anti-South Africanism".

South Africa remains a highly fragmented society. The tensions and fears resulting from this will, of necessity, spill over into the media themselves, as well as into readings and mis-reading of the media's messages. All sorts of (sometimes contradictory) pressures will emerge out of this.

South Africa's overbloated and distorted PBS system is going to face major downscaling and transformation crises.

South Africa is re-entering a post-fordist and post-modern world at a time when internal pressures often appear to demand decisions favouring fordist and modernite solutions (including in the media sector). For media decision-makers, dealing with these contradictory pressures will be a delicate balancing act.

All this points to an exciting period ahead for *Communicare* and communicologists - there will be a lot to analyse, monitor and comment upon in the upcoming years.

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