

Connie denies 'split' charge

THE RAND DAILY MAIL

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POLITICAL STAFF

DR Connie Mulder yesterday rejected allegations against him by the Nationalist hierarchy on the eve of his confrontation with the Transvaal Nationalist leader, Dr Andries Treurnicht.

Making only his third Press statement since his resignation from the Cabinet late last year because of the Information scandal, Dr Mulder described as a lie claims that he was sowing division in party ranks by giving his side of the Information story at National Party meetings.

"Since my resignation as an MP on February 1 I have neither attended nor addressed a single NP branch or divisional committee meeting," he said.

Dr Mulder's statement came as Dr Treurnicht prepared to hand him an ultimatum that he faced expulsion from the National Party unless he retired from politics completely.

The Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, apparently insisted on the confrontation

because of fears that Dr Mulder was planning a political comeback, supported by a group of Transvaal Nationalist MPs.

Their meeting — possibly this weekend — has placed Dr Treurnicht in a seriously embarrassing position.

He received Dr Mulder's still substantial support in his election late last year as Transvaal leader — the position held by Dr Mulder until his resignation from the Cabinet and as MP for Randfontein.

Most observers agree that Dr Mulder still has considerable support and may even be benefitting from a "sympathy" backlash despite the Information scandal.

If Dr Treurnicht was seen to be involved in forcing Dr Mulder out of the National Party he could jeopardise much of his own growing support at a time when most observers believe he is close to commanding a majority in the Nationalist Parliamentary caucus.

Erasmus
Rand Daily Mail
holds key
March 17 1959
to Govt
trust

THE ASSEMBLY. — Only full disclosure to a parliamentary select committee of all the evidence taken by the Erasmus Commission would restore trust in the institution of Government in South Africa and leave the Government free to deal with the major international problems facing the country, Mr Harry Schwarz said yesterday.

The Government's failure to deal adequately with the Information scandal was the biggest obstacle to the solution of those problems, Mr Schwarz said during debate on a motion proposed by Dr Zac de Beer (PFP Parktown) calling for the tabling in Parliament of the evidence taken by the Erasmus Commission after completion of its inquiry into alleged irregularities in the former Department of Information.

Mr Schwarz said the measures proposed by the Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, earlier in the debate, did not go half way to solving the problems created by the Information scandal.

Mr Botha was compounding the problem by allowing the commission itself to select what evidence should be made public in support of its findings.

"I don't believe any responsible person is going to accept that concept," Mr Schwarz said.

If no court of law could select the evidence that supported its own findings, the commission should not be able to do so.

One of the most important things the Opposition wanted was to ensure that nothing like the Information scandal happened again. This was the responsibility of Parliament and without knowing precisely what happened in the Information case, no safeguard could be prescribed. — Sapa.

DOCTOR Eschel Rhoodie, former Secretary for the Department of Information, claims that the political correspondent of The Citizen, Jaap Theron, was nominated for this post by the then Prime Minister, Mr Vorster.

Dr Rhoodie told me this in a series of interviews that he had with me in Quito, Ecuador.

Dr Rhoodie said The Citizen — which was a Department of Information front — needed a new political correspondent soon after its launching and that he and Dr Connie Mulder, then Minister of Information, had gone to Mr Vorster and

'Vorster named man for Citizen job'

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asked him to nominate a person who could fulfill this role on the newspaper.

"We said to the Prime Minister that we needed somebody who had access to him, Mr Vorster, and somebody whom Mr Vorster could relate to on important areas of Government policy.

"Mr Vorster nominated Jaap Theron and Dr Mulder then phoned Mr Theron and told him that he could soon

expect the offer of a position of political correspondent on The Citizen newspaper.

"Dr Mulder told me that he had advised Mr Theron to 'accept the position'."

Asked to comment on Dr Rhoodie's claim, Mr Theron said last night: "I have no knowledge of this. I was offered this position by the editor of The Citizen, Mr Johnson, and I accepted his offer."

Stalemate on land issue Phatudi

17/3/1979 X
SESHEGO. — The Lebowa government had never accepted the South African Government's Land Consolidation Act, the Chief Minister of Lebowa, Dr C N Phatudi, said in Seshego yesterday.

He was replying to accusations by opposition MPs in the Lebowa Legislative Assembly that his government was doing nothing about land the central Government took away from Lebowa.

"When I took over as the leader of the Lebowa ruling party in 1973, I rejected the central Government's land consolidation. On the other hand, Pretoria, too, is adamant about our suggested boundaries," Dr Phatudi said.

"We approached them time and again about the issue but were always told to hold on.

But he said that the situation might improve under the new Minister of Plural Relations and Development, Dr Piet Koornhof — "an understanding man" — especially since the South African Government was considering revising the 1936 Land Act.

"I wholeheartedly back the House if it intends to invite the Minister concerned to this House to discuss the land issue.

"I always believe that it is wiser for the conqueror to return the territory of the conquered if he (the conqueror) needs peace. This is one of the wise things the British did after they conquered blacks in this country, because later they gave the land back to them."

Claims by some members of the Legislative Assembly that Lebowa land had been taken by the central Government and given to Gazankulu and Maphogo — the Southern Ndebele homeland — would be investigated and the land recovered if it was found to be true, he said. — Sapa.

Shackles for three men in terror trial

By VUSI RADEBE

THREE young men who, it is alleged, underwent military training in China, wore leg irons when they appeared for remand in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court on charges under the Terrorism Act yesterday.

The men, charged with conspiring to overthrow the Government, are alleged to be members of the Pan-Africanist Congress.

Mr Norman Vusi Thusi, 20, of Jabavu, Soweto, Mr Prince Dube, 20, of Tembisa, and Mr Mthunzi Colombus Mazibuko, 25, of Diepkloof, Soweto, appeared before Mr J J Jonck.

Mr Thusi and Mr Dube had pleaded not guilty to three charges under the Terrorism Act and Mr Mazibuko to two charges.

The charges relate to 1976

when the men are alleged to have left South Africa, joined up with the PAC in Swaziland and been sent to China for military training.

The State alleges that during their seven-month stay in China from March 1977, they received training in the use of weapons, explosives and firearms as well as in map and compass reading.

The State further alleges that during the period October to December 1978, the men had firearms, ammunition and hand grenades in their possession. Mr Thusi and Mr Mazibuko are alleged to have also had explosives.

The men allegedly conspired with the PAC in Tanzania to infiltrate into South Africa from Botswana.

No evidence was led and the case was postponed to March 30.

RAND DAILY MAIL, Saturday, March 17, 1979.

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PAC trial told of Black Pimpernel

BETHAL. — Completely false and untrue evidence had been given to the Supreme Court by the fourth accused, Mr Bennie Ntoele, 38, of Mamelodi, Pretoria, the State submitted during cross-examination of Mr Ntoele, in the Pan-Africanist Congress trial yesterday.

The evidence dealt with an alleged trip through South Africa in 1975-76 by a man the State called a "sort of Scarlet Pimpernel".

Mr Ntoele is appearing, with 17 other men as alleged supporters or members of the banned PAC, on two main charges under the Terrorism Act and a number of alternative charges.

He was cross-examined by Mr M F Ackermann on a trip allegedly also made by Mr Ntoele's girl friend, a State witness who may not be identified.

She told of visiting Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, the Transkei, Durban and Swaziland, accompanied by a man the State has listed as a co-conspirator, Mr Isaac Mafatche, alias Saki.

Mr Ntoele agreed under cross-examination that Saki was boastful and talkative.

Mr Ackermann: How did you come to lend R110 to this lying, talkative, boastful person?

Mr Ntoele: He told me his grandmother was ill and he needed money.

Mr Ackermann: And you believed him?

Mr Ntoele: I had reason to believe she was ill.

Mr Ntoele told the court Saki had invited Mr Ntoele's girlfriend to go on holiday to the Cape with Saki.

Mr Ackermann: Why did he go on holiday if he was in such financial difficulties?

Mr Ntoele: We did not discuss the trip. He came to my house to tell me about his grandmother and ask for a loan.

Mr Ntoele said he was aware Saki was a fugitive from the police but had never questioned him about his (Saki's) future.

Mr Ackermann: How did you know you would be able to recover the loan from this penniless fugitive?

Mr Ntoele: It was going to be used for his grandmother. If he didn't pay the loan back, I wouldn't mind.

The hearing was adjourned to Monday. — Sapa.

Cover-up of Info scandal would be shameful — Heunis

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17/3/1979

THE ASSEMBLY. — It was not shameful to inherit a scandal but rather to cover it up, the Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr Chris Heunis, said yesterday.

The Minister was speaking to a Private Member's motion introduced by Dr Zac de Beer (PFP Parktown) calling on the Government to recommend to the State President that the evidence taken by the Erasmus Commission be tabled in Parliament.

"When the Prime Minister stood on the steps of Parliament last year he made a very important statement, namely pledging himself to clean administration, little knowing how soon he would have to support this statement."

When the so-called Information Scandal broke, the Prime Minister had taken immediate steps to identify those involved by appointing a judicial commission of inquiry.

"Was there a more effective way to expose to the bone the whole matter, de-



Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr Heunis.

spite the fact that it caused both the Government and its members a lot of embarrassment?"

At the time the scandal broke, the Prime Minister had been confronted with half an investigation which a former commissioner had compiled in his own way and a dossier which was too weak to place before a

court — and which was also too complicated to place before the Assembly.

"To my mind there was only one way to conduct the investigation and that was through an in-depth inquiry."

In calling for the Erasmus Commission's evidence to be tabled in Parliament, did Dr De Beer and his

colleagues acknowledge the integrity of that commission? Mr Heunis asked.

"I wish to ask members of the Assembly: 'Have you done your best to acknowledge and defend the integrity of this commission?'"

Obstacles should not be placed in the way of the commission, preventing it from completing its work.

"Is it not a fact that despite hindrances the commission had got right to the heart of the irregularities. As a result of the commission's work there are people who are no longer in the Government."

The commission, because of the magnitude of its work, had asked for more time to complete its investigations. It was obvious that it should be given the opportunity to complete its work unhindered.

It had required a man with an uncompromising standpoint and integrity to do what the Prime Minister, Mr Botha, had done to take the action that he had. — Sapa.

'Let Parliament judge'

THE RAND DAILY MAIL

17/3/1979

THE ASSEMBLY. — The Prime Minister Mr P W Botha had blindly staked his Government on the findings of a commission unskilled in politics which had investigated criminal liability, not political liability, the leader of the New Republic Party, Mr Vause Raw, said yesterday.

Speaking to a Private Member's motion introduced by Dr Zac de Beer (PFP Parktown) calling on the Government to table the Erasmus Commission's evidence, Mr Raw said the question was not one of criminal liability but political liability.

The best body to judge political liability was not the Erasmus Commission, which consisted of people who by training and instinct were not politicians, but Parliament itself.

A select parliamentary committee was the correct way to establish political responsibility of parliamentarians involved.

Even a general election would not help unless the public had all the facts at their disposal.

The election of 1977 had not cleared the air because the Government had received a mandate from an electorate which did not have all the facts.

It was essential that credibility was restored to the system of parliamentary government.

Mr Raw said the Government had done more to undermine the credibility of the Erasmus Commission than anyone else because it had failed to take steps to protect the commission from people like

General Van den Bergh, who had publicly held the commission in contempt.

Mr Raw said the NRP wanted the truth to be seen and believed by the people. They wanted to maintain the security of the State, to prevent the cover-up and to stop rumour-mongering by disclosing the true facts, to clear the innocent and punish the guilty and to restore confidence in the institution of Parliament and the principle that no-one was above the law.

"That is why 50 000 people have signed the petition to have General Van den Bergh prosecuted."

"They signed because they want to have their faith in the system restored," said Mr Raw. — Sapa.

PM silent on his 'bad' relations with General

CAPE TOWN. — The Prime Minister Mr P W Botha said yesterday he had nothing to add to what the Erasmus Commission had found about General Hendrik van den Bergh.

Mr Botha was asked by Sapa to comment on SAAN newspaper reports yesterday morning that Gen Van den Bergh, former head of the Bureau for State Security, had said his relations with the Prime Minister had never been good.

The newspaper reports said Gen Van den Bergh had confirmed in an interview that his personal relations with the Prime Minister had not been good for a number of years, and that they had had a serious personal difference of opinion over the invasion of Angola by South African forces in 1975/76.

"But that was not the

most serious of the clashes that we have had over the years. I think his personal dislike of me stems from the fact that I was one of the few people who stood up to him. John Vorster did not," Gen Van den Bergh is quoted as saying.

General Van den Bergh is also reported as saying that about a year ago Mr Vorster and Mr Botha had a very serious disagreement which resulted in Mr Botha tendering his resignation.

"Mr Vorster did not accept the resignation, and a few days later Mr Botha resumed office as if nothing had happened."

Mr Botha, asked to comment on these statements by General Van den Bergh, said: "I have nothing to add to that which the Erasmus Commission has found about him."

The Erasmus Commis-

sion in its report last December said General Van den Bergh had not confined himself to his role as head of the Bureau for State Security, but had actually used his office and his personal friendship with Mr Vorster to try to influence the course of events in South Africa itself.

"He saw himself as the power behind the throne, who, through the person of Mr Vorster, tried to manipulate events in the direction that he wanted them to go.

"For this reason, he sometimes withheld certain facts from Mr Vorster and sometimes gave him only selected facts. Then again, there were times when he ignored Mr Vorster's instructions. Sometimes he traded on the Prime Minister's name to gain his own ends," the Erasmus report said. — Sapa.

Secrecy over Info is laughable, says Basson

THE ASSEMBLY. — The Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, would not be able to solve his problems over the Information scandal unless he was able to unite Parliament behind him, Mr Japie Basson of the Progressive Federal Party for Bezuidenhout, said yesterday.

Mr Basson was speaking to a Private Member's motion calling on the Govern-

ment to recommend to the State President that the evidence gathered by the commission of inquiry into alleged irregularities in the former Department of Information should be tabled in Parliament.

"Unless the Prime Minister unites Parliament behind him, the suspicion and reservations will continue. He can do it, but then we must understand one an-

other," Mr Basson said.

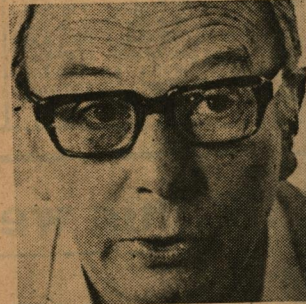
The secrecy surrounding the Information scandal today, compared to the secrecy in war-time Britain, was laughable.

"The problem will not be solved by the Erasmus Commission, newspapers or politicians, but by Parliament," Mr Basson said.

The Opposition was not concerned about the pros-

ecution of the officials involved. "Our concern is greater than that. The fact of the matter is that confidence in politicians has been shaken," he said.

Parliament should be put at rest about other secret projects of the former Department of Information. There was no guarantee that other projects of a party political nature were not continuing. — Sapa.



MR JAPIE BASSON

Rhodie regrets

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Africa detente

DR ESCHEL Rhodie, former Secretary for Information, told me he regarded as the "greatest mistake of his life" launching the detente with Africa during the Vorster administration.

During my series of interviews with him in Quito, Ecuador, last month, Dr Rhodie said Mr Vorster was on the point of retiring when the Africa detente programme came into being.

Dr Rhodie said he and General Hendrik van den Bergh initiated and ran the campaign.

"Those travels into Africa did several major things for South Africa — including keeping Mr Vorster as Prime Minister when he wanted to go, as well as earning him a reputation as a statesman.

"If we had held back on those initiatives for several months, Mr Vorster would have had his wish and retired, and Dr Mulder would have become Prime Minister and would have got the credit for being the architect of the outward policy."

Dr Rhodie said that the popular conception of Mr Vorster as a statesman was exaggerated.

"Everybody who counts knows damn well that it was myself and General Van den Bergh that set up all those meetings and, in fact, Mr Vorster was very reluctant to act on our initiatives and I don't think it would be unfair of me to say this, that I think history must know it: We had to drag Mr Vorster kicking into Africa.

"Right from the start he seemed unwilling, even when we had conclusive proof that moderate African heads of state like Sengor and Houphouet-Boigny, were prepared to meet him immediately in Africa.

"It took a great deal of time and trouble to get him to agree to travel into Africa with us, and we had exactly the same problems in getting him to go to Israel."

Dr Rhodie said he had great admiration for Mr Vorster's abilities as a political force in his own party and that he was without equal as a political debater, but he had several criticisms to make of Mr Vorster in other fields.

He likened Mr Vorster's political outlook to that of General Smuts.

"Mr Vorster finally wanted to go down in history as the man who would bring peace to Southern Africa. But in this vision he forgot that what was really needed was a dramatic initiative in his own country on race relations.

"In other words he was standing on top of Table Mountain looking into Southern Africa but failing to look at what was happening at his feet in District Six."

General Smuts, Dr Rhodie said, had done exactly the same, in the sense that he had stood on top of Table Mountain and looked at the world, but had failed to see South Africa's race problems evolving at a tremendous rate right under his nose.

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Mr Vorster and Dr Rhodie on one of their overseas trips. "We had to drag Mr Vorster kicking into Africa," Dr Rhodie told the Rand Daily Mail yesterday.