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## **The Wits-Koornhof Debate : Is there really a difference between the English and Afrikaans Presses?**

Christo Doherty

On the twentieth of March 1981, a lunchtime meeting at Wits University, a political incident occurred. The following day the event was newsworthy enough to feature on the front page of three major Cape Town newspapers. Two of the newspapers: The Cape Times and The Weekend Argus, claim to constitute opposition to the ruling government and the Apartheid system. The third newspaper, Die Burger, is openly and avidly pro-government. Yet as this case study will make clear, all three of the newspapers, despite their party differences, define the Wits incident using the same criteria: as illegitimate and deviant behaviour outside the gamut of political activity. This is because the three newspapers are reproducing slightly different aspects of the same ideology.

To understand how and why this should be, I must make use of Gramsci's concept of hegemony as applied by Hall (1). Hegemony exists when an alliance of classes is able to exert overall control over the social formation. This is done by winning the consent of the subordinate classes through the operation of a complex ideological field within which the dominant and subordinate classes live reality. The operation of ideology has three functions within hegemonic monopoly capitalism.

Firstly, ideology serves the vital purpose of masking the exploitative relations at the basis of the capitalist system. Ideology shifts attention from the productive process to the area of exchange. Thus wage appears in the guise of fair payment for a days work when it is actually just enough for the cost of the labourer's social reproduction.

In the second instance the classes, which are constituted by the (now masked) exploitative relations of production, are fragmented into a multitude of self-seeking and possessive individuals. This leads us to the third effect of ideology which is to recombine these individuals into imaginary lived relations.

New ideological unities - of "the nation" or "consumers" or "public interest" - are invoked which obscure the underlying levels of class relations and economic exploitation. Ideology is thus an underlying set of definitions - a deep structure - which shapes our intuitive

understanding of how society is ordered. On the surface there is often considerable overlap and disagreement because it is a complex field reflecting the "complex interior formation of the dominant classes" (2). But it is the structures of ideology, which are institutionalised and naturalised into operational practices within society, that persist beyond the particular arrangement of hegemonic alliances.

A critical example of this process is the state. By existing above the immediate profits of any particular alliance of ruling fractions it presents itself as a neutral sphere. But it is a sphere "par excellence where the generalisation and universalizing of class interests into 'general interest' takes place" (3) and is therefore of prime importance in securing the conditions for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. It is important to note that hegemony is an active struggle in which subordinate classes are in constant flux while the dominant grouping of class fractions struggles to confine all opposition within manageable limits. As long as the hegemonic grouping is able to contain all opposition within its own ideological limits it is able to rule the social complex by consent rather than force.

The development of capitalism in South Africa has been characterised by the continued use of institutionalised violence, both in order to secure a cheap black labour supply (and thus extract a vast amount of surplus value) and to keep the source of that labour supply economically and politically powerless (4). In no sense therefore has hegemony, which implies class-rule by consent of the subordinated classes, been obtained over the entire social formation. Where hegemony has been relatively successfully achieved is within the ideological unity of "the white population."

It is in this grouping that the legitimacy of the hegemonic grouping's rule is justified to its constituted classes by the continual ideological work of selective presentation of social knowledge (5).

In the increasingly diverse and fragmented conditions of monopoly capitalism the great weight of social knowledge is distributed by the media. The media provide images of different groups to each other. It classifies the images and combines them into an ideologically coherent view of "the world" as it should be naturally understood. This calls for constant ideological labour by which events are continually brought within the interpretation of the dominant ideology.

And just as the crucial role of the state is obscured by its apparent neutrality so is the ideological work of the news media obscured behind journalistic codes of professional practice. Most journalists tend to regard practices such as "news sense" and "newsworthiness" as natural or "just-in-the-thumbs" etc. But this is precisely how ideology works. It is an unconscious process which to those situated within the dominant ideology seems the "common sense" way of understanding reality. As Althusser has observed:

Ideology is that form of specific unconsciousness called consciousness which imposes itself as a structure on the understanding (6).

The news values of newspapers working within the ideology of the hegemonic groupings of monopoly capitalism are primarily event orientated. Thus

Graham Murdock (7) in his analysis of the newscoverage given to the 1968 London demonstrations found the same criteria underlying the different newspaper reports. This is because all commercial newspapers share the same set of operational practices. The focus on the form of the event as newsworthy is invariably to the detriment of attention to underlying structural causes. In this way the real foundations of the event are made to disappear from view, analogous to the ideological representation of the economic system as if it consisted of exchange alone.

To sell as news however, these isolated events must be fitted into some sort of an interpretive framework. Inevitably this process operates on the surface level of relationships between forms and images. Murdock points out that in this superficial way the Dominican Crisis of 1965 was approached in terms of the image of the Cuban Crisis, and Prague in 1968 was understood as Hungary in 1956. This fulfills the viral ideological function of classifying out all competing definitions of political activity. Thus political action which attempts to operate outside the bounds of "legitimacy" can, on the basis of surface characteristics, be defined as deviant or criminal behavior. At no time should this be seen as a deliberate conspiracy on the part of certain journalists. Rather, it is because journalists are socialised into seeing and describing the world in terms of "newsworthiness" that they reproduce the existing dominant ideology (8).

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THE INCIDENT - A group of people, mostly in their early twenties, gathered in a building. They spent about an hour shouting at an older visitor who was thus prevented from speaking. Interchanges of insults, singing and gesturing took place between the visitor and the younger people. There were occasional outbursts of physical violence between different factions within the group of young people.

Apart from the focus on an isolated event I have tried to give an account of the Wits incident in a relatively non-ideological way. But not only is the focus on events per se in itself ideological, but the selection of certain events according to their newsworthiness, serves to contain the experience within the limits of the dominant ideology. The selection of this incident for media coverage rather than the lunchtime discussion groups and seminars reveals a particular interpretation of the world.

Obviously if the event - once selected - was reported in this way, it would be meaningless and not suitable for incorporation into the newspaper. The journalist's experience of the event must be made intelligible to the newspaper readers by the work of signification. By this process the journalist's understanding is encoded into the symbolic discourse of the newspaper page creating a preferred reading of the event. The very act of encoding has to make use of classifications and definitions which have ideological implications in that they presuppose certain actions and values. In this case the classification of the older man as a government Cabinet Minister and the younger people as students will have certain connotations.

But the work of ideological signification goes further than this. The news story is inserted into a particular thematic interpretation, often supported by the naturalizing influence of a photograph, and always

# Chanting Wits students drown Koornhof speech

Owa Correspondent

**JOHANNESBURG.** — Pandemonium reigned for almost an hour at a lunchtime meeting at the University of the Witwatersrand yesterday, as the guest speaker, Dr Piet Koornhof, battled to shout a few disjointed sentences of his speech above jeers, shouting, singing and cheering of about 300 of the 1 200 students who packed the great hall.

Dr Koornhof, the Minister of Co-operation and Development, had been invited by two campus organizations, Political Forum and the Students Moderate Alliance, as a speaker in the series of political talks by spokesmen of the political parties contesting the general election.

Professor P Tyson, deputy vice-chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, yesterday condemned the behaviour of students who had disrupted the meeting.

## Heckling

It would not have been inappropriate for Dr Koornhof to have been heckled, Professor Tyson said, but he should not have been denied the opportunity to make his point "as that is a denial of the freedom we preach."

As Dr Koornhof walked on to the stage he was greeted with



Banner-waving students at yesterday's meeting at Wits

chants of "Amandla", "Sieg Heil", "Free Mandela", "Get out" and "Remember Sharpeville".

A group of students, mostly sitting at the back of the hall, supported Dr Koornhof, chanting "Stem Nasionaal, stem Nasionaal" and trying to shout down the other student group.

Dr Koornhof attempted to start his address in a jovial mood, battling against the roar to "thank" the students for a "warm and hospitable welcome." He was soon drowned out with shouts of "Get out, fascist," "Bull..." and "Where's your pass?"

Dr Koornhof responded: "At least it's exciting at Wits."

At the end of the meeting, a furious Dr Koornhof was pelted with paper balls, made mostly with crumpled posters.

On two occasions during Dr Koornhof's attempt to speak, a few hundred students stood to sing Nkosi Sikelele Afrika.

Dr Koornhof then shouted over the microphone, challenging the students to sing Die Stem.

The rival group of students stood up and sang Die Stem and at one point Dr Koornhof joined in, singing loudly over the microphone.

Most of the 1 200 students who

squeezed their way into the hall, sat in silence, overwhelmed by the two rival groups.

On three occasions during the meeting, the chairman, Mr Tony Leon, attempted to take the microphone and call for a vote of whether students wanted the meeting to continue.

Dr Koornhof did not hand over the microphone, saying repeatedly he was determined to stand there for the full hour in front of the students.

## Fascism

A photographer who leaned out from a vantage point near the roof to photograph the audience was jeered and booed by students who suspected him of being a security police photographer. The photographer could not be traced for comment.

Mr Tony Leon, who chaired the meeting, said the refusal to hear a dissenting point of view amounted to "fascism of the left."

Mrs Helen Suzman, PFP MP for Houghton, interviewed later, said: "You cannot stand for freedom of speech and not give a man a hearing. I think it is rank discourtesy to invite a man to the campus and then deny him a chance to put his point of view however disagreeable it may be."

(Report by Helen Zille, 171 Mail Street, Johannesburg.)

signified by a headline. The thematic interpretation or preferred reading of the event is substantiated by the positioning of the story within the newspaper layout. The reader, to reach an experience of the event, must also be engaged in symbolic work. This is the process of decoding the different codes and their constituent layers of signification within the newstory. If the encoding process has been successful this should lead the reader to the journalist's interpretation of the event. This transparency between the encoding and the decoding of the message is termed "ideological closure" (9). But all semiotic codes have the potential to produce a wide range of possible readings. Therefore the newspaper has to successively limit the possible meaning by overlapping codes to attain ideological closure.

Of the three newspapers, it was the Cape Times that gave the incident greatest prominence. It is particularly interesting that the Wits story is juxtaposed against an article describing the inauguration of the sixth rector of University of Cape Town (UCT). Within the text of the article on the Wits incident is a small black and white photograph of "banner waving students." The inauguration story however, featured a large colour photograph of the new rector. As the colour photograph was placed between the texts of both articles it has the effect of becoming the implicit subject of both the articles and the focus of the reader's attention.

Signs have meaning because of their relationship and their opposition to the class of signs which they belong to. Thus a semantic opposition is set up between the two photographs, an opposition at the level of what Barthes (10) would call myth, i.e. ideological connotation. Photographs have the singular advantage of being able to impose themselves as "nature" on the reader. It is out of this seemingly natural denotation that the ideological connotation of the photograph can blossom forth. Thus the inauguration photograph denotes a particular man, Dr Saunders; yet it simultaneously acts as a signifier on the ideological level for the great liberal academic tradition. The piously grave expression of the new rector, his heavy robes of office and the throne-like chair, all become the form into which the myth of "Academia" is poured.

The smaller black and white photograph must be understood in terms of its relationship to the almost effortless naturalism of the colour photograph. The smaller photograph, by means of a crowded composition and a choice of particularly long haired students waving crudely-lettered banners, signifies anarchic disorder. In opposition to the enduring balance and protocol of the juxtaposed colour photograph the black and white photo suggests a transient outburst by deviant students.

The opposing angles of the two stories and the way that the ideological meaning is a result of their relationship is shown even more clearly by a comparison of the headlines. Headlines invariably characterise the specific "news angle" (which is the ideological theme) of the story. The rational dignity and tradition espoused by the Saunderson's photograph is summed up by "NEW UCT HEAD CALLS FOR A REFORM." The adolescent insolence of the Wits students is concisely expressed as "CHANTING WITS STUDENTS DROWN KOORNHOF SPEECH." The Wits incident is thus defined and assimilated within the cherished liberal understanding of freedom of speech and is characterised from the beginning of the Times story as "Pandemonium

# Education: New UCT head calls for reform

Staff Reporter

THE government should scrap the system of black students having to seek ministerial permission to attend "white" universities, Dr Stuart Saunders, the new vice-chancellor and principal of the University of Cape Town, said in his inaugural speech yesterday.

He told about 1 000 people who attended his inauguration at the sixth vice-chancellor and principal, in Jameson Hall, that it was not possible for South Africa to rely upon the white population to provide the number of graduates necessary for the full development of the nation.

Among the dignitaries who attended the inauguration were:

The Administrator, Mr Gene Louw; the Chief Minister of Kwazulu, Paramount Chief Gatscha Buthelesi; the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cape Town, Owen Cardinal McCann; the Provincial Secretary for the Cape, Mr H Gie; and the rectors of various South African universities.

## Great backlog

The system of ministerial permission was "deeply resented, is insulting and is unnecessary. It is also clear that it is not in the national interest. The Prime Minister has correctly called for a fundamental review of the South African educational systems", Dr Saunders said.

He said he hoped this would result in major reform, ensuring a significantly greater expenditure on black education and the elimination of discrimination.

"But the backlog is so great that whatever solutions are found, emergency action is needed in the short and medium terms."

Dr Saunders said the problems encountered by black students with regard to adequate housing were enormous.

"It is strange, to say the least, that just as the black staff in the hospital kitchen at Groote Schuur Hospital can live on the premises but not the black nurses, so in universities black staff in residences are allowed to live on the campus but not black students."

He said he was troubled by the attempts of some to impose an academic boycott on this country's universities. This was a negation of all that a university held dear.

## Search for truth

"Surely the exchange of ideas and the mutual search for truth can only help to solve problems in a reasonable manner, whereas isolation can only aggravate and increase the risk of unacceptable solutions."

The universities in this country received some 80 percent of their funds from the State and it was to the great credit of the government that these funds, with minor exceptions, were given over to the university were not earmarked in any way.

"This autonomy of the universities is treasured in this country and I believe that in this respect we are in a much more favourable position than some of the universities in Europe and elsewhere in the world."

Dr Saunders said a university was concerned with the pursuit of truth through the addition to knowledge by research. It was also committed to the transfer of knowledge through teaching.

## Teaching code

"In recent times UCT has emphasised the importance of teaching by the establishment of the Teaching Methods Unit, the acceptance of a Code of Teaching and the creation of a Distinguished Teachers Award."

"Students need to appreciate some of the excitement and the fun of discovery and the mere recounting of facts and events does not easily accomplish that. It is therefore essential that the university should always seek the highest possible scholastic accomplishments in recruiting and promoting staff."

"A university which does not give pride of place to scholarship will soon become an intellectual desert."



The sixth principal and vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Dr Stuart Saunders, was inaugurated yesterday morning at a ceremony attended by 1 000 people in Jameson Hall.

Picture: John Ruythou



The chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Mr Harry Oppenheimer, listens to the inaugural speech made by the new principal and vice-chancellor of UCT, Dr Stuart Saunders.

reigned for almost an hour ...." The full meaning of this description at the ideological level is created by its juxtaposition against the listing of dignitaries who respectfully attended the UCT ceremony and quotations from Saunderson's speech which stress the need for rational reform.

In analysing the ideological bias of any news report it is also vital to note who is quoted i.e. who is given the power to define the situation. In the Cape Times coverage the only people quoted are the deputy vice-chancellor of the University, a "moderate" chairman of the meeting and the Progressive Reform Party MP for Houghton - of all places! (11). No attempt is made to find out what motivated the "small group of radical students." By denying them any rational motivation the implicit interpretation is that it is merely youthful/anarchic deviance.

In response to the Wits incident the chancellor states that the action "is a denial of the freedom of speech." The chairman claims it is "a refusal to hear a dissenting point of view." Most remarkable of all, MP Helen Suzman is chosen to define the student's standpoint for them: "You cannot stand for freedom of speech and not give a man a hearing!" (12)

Die Burger takes the same line of interpretation towards the incident. The theme elucidated by the headline is that of childish behavior - "WITSIES JOU KOORNHOF UIT." (WITSIES TAUNT KOORNHOF) Apart from a rather stronger bias towards Koornhof than the Cape Times the incident is structured semiotically as ordered protocol versus agitated disorder:

"Dr. Piet Koornhof, Minister of Co-operation and Development, yesterday, after chaos stood at attention and sang the National Anthem of South Africa."

By the solemn listing of his title and the full name of the National anthem Koornhof is made representative of the traditional and legitimate form of government.

## Wits-gejou keer Koornhof nie

### Van Ons Korrespondent

**JOHANNESBURG.** - Te midde van stinkbomme en rosmiddel wat om hom reën, krete van "Amandla!", "Free Mandela!", "Fascist!" en talle onwelvoeglike uitroepes, het dr. Piet Koornhof, Minister van Samewerking en Ontwikkeling, gister by die Universiteit van die Witwatersrand ná 'n chaos in die Groot Saal op aandaag gestaan en Die Stem van Suid-Afrika gesing.

Sowat honderd gematigde studente het met 'n oorverdowende lawaai op die agtergrond saam met hom gesing. Die gematigde studente het dr. Koornhof daarna toegesig.

Dr. Koornhof het in sy toespraak van 'n uur min kans gekry om hom hoorbaar te maak. "As julle nie stilbly nie, gaan ek maar die volle uur hier bly staan," het hy verskeie kere uitgeroep. Niemand agter die eerste drie rye in die saal sou dit kon hoor nie, want die studente het hulle, in die woorde van 'n NP-ondersteuner, "soos barbare gedra".

Reeds voor die aankoms van dr. Koornhof was die atmosfeer gelaai. Aan die linkerkant van die saal het die linksesindes en radikale gesit, hoofsaaklik in die voorste twintig rye. Aan die regterkant en regs agter was die gematigdes.

'n Vuisgeveg het byna kort voor dr. Koornhof se aankoms uitgebreek toe 'n gematigde student 'n hakekruis en 'n plakkaat met die woorde *Nazi Go Home* van die verhoeg verwed.

Mnr. Lance Crystal (19), Studentersaadslid en ondervoorsitter van die Student Moderate Alliance (SMA), is hardhandig rondgeruk toe hy van die plakkaat verwed.

Na aantrane het mej. Marie Jeanne Thole (17), sekretaresse van die SMA, deur 'n jouende, jillende groep radikale studente na haar sitplek gehardloop.

Onder krete van "Hei

• VERVOLG OP BL. 2 •

**PARTYE  
BENOEM  
REKORD-  
AANTAL  
VIR  
ELEKSIE**

### Van Ons

#### Politieke Beriggewer

ALLES dui daarop dat 'n rekordgetal kandidaat Maandag vir die parlementêre en provinsiale verkiesing op 29 April benoem sal word.

In hierdie stadium lyk dit of baie min kandidaat onbestrede verkies sal word. Heel-party driehoekige en vierhoekige stryde word verwag, veral in Kaapland, Natal en Transvaal. Die drie partye wat in die Volksraad verteenwoordig is - die NP, die PFP en die NRP - het reeds die meeste van hul kandidaat aangewys, maar kan in enkele kiesafdelings nog met verrassings kom.

Benoeemingshowe vir die parlementêre en provinsiale verkiesings sit Maandag van 10 vm. tot 11 vm. in elk van die 165 kiesafdelings in die land.

(Berig deur A. Riek, Keerlomsrus - 30, Kaapstad)



DR. KOORNHOF



DR. STUART SAUNDERS is gister by 'n luisterryke geleentheid in die Jamesonaal by die Universiteit van Kaapstad deur die kanselier, mnr. Harry Oppenheimer, as sesde vise-kanselier en as Rektor van die universiteit ingehuldig. Hier lewer hy sy inhuldigingsrede voor 'n gehoor van sowat duisend mense.

## UK teen 1988 56% gekleurd: Rektor

"SUID-AFRIKA het nie die finansiële vermoë of arbeidskrag om onbepaald universiteite op te rig nie. Daarom moet die geriewe by huidige universiteite ten volle benut word deur studente van alle etniese groepe," het dr. Stuart Saunders gisteroggend by sy inhuldigingsrede as sesde Vise-kanselier en Rektor van die Universiteit van Kaapstad gesê.

Hy is deur die Kanselier, mnr. Harry Oppenheimer, voor 'n gehoor van sowat duisend mense in die Jamesonaal van die universiteit ingehuldig.

Onder die hooggeplaastes was mnr. Gene Louw, administrateur van Kaapland; die provinsiale sekretaris, mnr. H. Gie; sir Richard Luyt, vorige Rektor van die Universiteit van Kaapstad; prof. Mike de Vries, Rektor van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch; prof. R.E. van der Ross, Rektor van die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland en prof. P.C. Mokgong, Rektor van die Universiteit van die Noorde.

Dr. Saunders was voorheen hoof van die departement van geneeskunde en deeltydse vise-hoof van die departement van beplanning by die universiteit.

Hy het gesê in 1968 was 88 persent van die universiteit se studentetal blank en die res gekleurd. "Ons voorspel dat in 1988 44 persent blank en 56 gekleurd sal wees. Dit beteken 'n ontvolging in die aantal swart matrusante in die afisbare toekoms. Geriewe by huidige universiteite moet dus maksimaal benut word sodat die meeste van dié matrusante hoër opleiding kan geniet. Ons hoop dat ná die Eerste Minister se versoek dat die onderwysstelsel hersien word, swart onderwys uitgebrei en diskriminasie uitgeskakel sal word.

"'n Universiteit van Afrika moet die verskillende kulture en waardes van ons Afrika-erfenis te alle tye bewaar. Ek glo dat die Universiteit van Kaapstad altyd ten volle daarna sal streef om dié erfenis en die voorspoed van ons land te verseker," het dr. Saunders gesê.

## GEJOU BETREUR

**Van Ons Politieke Redaksie**  
JOHANNESBURG. - Die meeste studente betreur die laakbare behandeling wat dr. Piet Koornhof, Minister van Samewerking en Ontwikkeling, by die Universiteit van die Witwatersrand van 'n klein groepie radikale ontvang het, het mnr. Ronald Rallis, voorsitter van Political Forum, gisteraand aan Die Burger gesê.

Dié studente-organisasie, wat hom intelligente en betekenisvolle politieke debat

tussen leiers van die universiteit ten doel stel, het dr. Koornhof genooi.

Die manier waarop dr. Koornhof deur 'n minderheid doodgeskreeu is, bevorder nie Wits se ideaal van vryheid van spraak en akademiese vryheid nie.

"Ons wil dit beklemtoon dat gister se vergadering deur 'n klein groep radikale ontvrig is," het mnr. Rallis en mnr. Tony Leon, wat op gister se vergadering voorsitter was, gesê.

## KOORNHOF

● VERVOLG VAN BLADSY 1 ●  
Hitler!" - met die Hitler-saai - 'n gedreunsang van "Free Mandela!" en onbeskryflike onwettigheidsaan die linkerkant en "We Want Piet!" aan die regterkant, het dr. Koornhof op die verhoog verskyn.

Toe dr. Koornhof begin praat, is hy doodgeskreeu. Die sowat driehonderd plakkaatswaaiende radikale het telkens "Sharpeville!" gedreunsang en twee keer "Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika" gesing.

"Dié lied sal ek graag saam met julle sing, dit is mooi," het dr. Koornhof bo die lawaai uitgeroep.

"Meneer die voorsitter, dames en here..." is al wat hy kon uitkry voor hy weer doodgeraas is.

"Dankie vir die gasvrye en vriendelike ontvangs," het 'n steeds glimlaggende dr. Koornhof uitgeroep. Die radikale studente het daarop "We Shall Overcome" gesing.

Onder uitroep van "rasis" en "hou jou bek" het dr. Koornhof verskeie kere geprobeer om te begin praat. Later het hy gesê die studente is erger as die Herstigste Nasionale Party.

"Julle laat my dink aan 'n

kat. As jy hom slaan, tjank hy."

Toe dr. Koornhof later - sonder om tot in daardie stadium sy toespraak te kon lewer - aan die studente vra waarom hulle hom nie 'n kans gee om te praat nie, is hy begroet met die dreunsang van "Sieg Heil!" en "Mandela kan nie praat nie."

As hy soos Mandela opgetree het, kon hy ook nie vandag praat nie, het dr. Koornhof geantwoord.

Sigbaar vererg het hy gesê dit is nie die manier om die land se probleme op te los nie. "As ek sien hoe julle jul gedra, is ek bly dit is nie julle wat die land regeer nie," het hy onder toeguijing en uitroep van "That's the stuff" van die gematigdes gesê.

"Dit wys in elk geval aan die wêreld waarom mense nie vir jul party kan stem nie. Dit is 'n boikot-party."

Intussen word berig die Studenteraad van Wits het Woensdag op 'n vergadering besluit om die Opperaad vir Sport in Afrika se swart lys vir sportlui te steun. In 'n abnormale gemeenskap kan geen normale sport gespeel word nie, is besluit.

(Berig deur I. Capraro, Voorbuitstraat 3), Nieu-Doornfontein, Johannesburg.)



The internal juxtaposition of the darkly outlined reference to the nomination of the political parties serves to shift the reader's attention towards the legitimate arena of white political activity thus decoding the Wits incident as irrational. The Wits story is continued onto page two of the same issue of Die Burger. Here the same device as that of the Cape Times is used to contrast the myth of "academia" with youthful chaos. Instead of using a colour photograph, a black and white photograph is used on its own. This photograph has its theme anchored by the caption: "Dr Stuart Saunders is gister by n luisterryke geleentheid ....." (Dr. Stuart Saunders was yesterday at a splendid occasion ....) In this way it signifies the theme of academia against the entire description of Koornhof's belated attempts to speak.

In a test of "who gets a chance to define" we get an incongruity similar to that of the Cape Times. Koornhof is given a much greater role. His comments mistakenly identifying the radical students as PFP supporters are gleefully recorded by the newspaper thus pushing the implicit interpretation of the incident into the area of irrational heckling. The only other people given quotations are the chairman of Political Forum and an anonymous National Party supporter - who seems even better suited than Mrs Suzman to define the situation! Again, the implied definition of the incident is an irrationally excessive heckling which serves to negate the freedom of speech.

Unlike the Cape Times, Die Burger makes use of the connotations it has established by the Koornhof-Wits story to "classify out" an action by the Wits Students Representative Council. The behavior of the Wits students, in comparison to the myth of correct academic protocol evoked by the inauguration photograph, is stigmatised as barbaric and deviant. Therefore the action of the Wits SRC in supporting sports boycotts against an "abnormale gemeenskap" ( abnormal community) is shown to be utterly illogical. To anyone who takes the preferred reading of the article it is the Wits radicals who are an "abnormale gemeenskap."

The extract in the Weekend Argus was published slightly later than those in the other two newspapers. Therefore the Argus does not feel that it need publish details about the event. By this time the incident had been completely contained within the definitions of legitimate political activity. For the Argus it now becomes a question of cutting out the possibility (raised by Die Burger and probably other Nationalist party sources) that the activity could have been an extreme form of an acceptable political activity - heckling. This can be seen as manoeuvres within the dominant ideological field. Thus the only authorities that are quoted are "top spokesmen of the Progressive Federal Party." The first spokesman, Van Zyl Slabbert, banishes the students into the wilderness beyond legitimate politics. He also makes use of the opportunity to outline the principles of parliamentary democratic debate. The next speaker, Elgin, turns the incident into an affair of bad manners and places it neatly within the domain of university discipline. Thus throughout the newspaper coverage of the Wits incident, the structural underpinnings and political motivations are systematically obscured and distorted.

Despite the particular (party) political biases that differentiate the three newspapers, they all agree on the structure within which these differences must be resolved. The preferred reading in all three of the news-reports characterises the incident as rowdy student deviance and thus denies it a political definition. The method of parliamentary debate between reasonable and considered protagonists is presented as taken for granted, immutable and outside history.

# PFP condemns

## Political Staff

TOP spokesmen of the Progressive Federal Party today condemned the behaviour of a group of students who disrupted a meeting addressed by Dr Piet Koornhof at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The Leader of the Opposition, Dr F van Zyl Slabbert, said: 'Compared to Dr Koornhof, I had a mild experience of heckling and questioning from the same group of radical students who, it appears, have written off white politics completely.'

## Wits

'I disagree very strongly with the views of Dr Koornhof's party, but I believe he can be far more effectively attacked by listening to him and then putting questions to him.'

The national chairman of the PFP, Mr Colin Eglin, said:

'Their distasteful display of intolerance and bad manners towards an invited guest speaker did a disservice to the University of the Witwatersrand.'

(Report by F. S. Esterhuysen, 122 St. George's Street, Cape Town.)

So despite their superficial biases, all three of the newspapers are overwhelmingly biased towards the existing political system. Thus they are able to continually differ amongst themselves yet inevitably advance the long term interests of the prevailing social order. As Stuart Hall and other structural analysts have repeatedly pointed out, this is not a particular conspiracy but is due to the commercial journalists practices of encoding, which:

without favouring particular positions in the field of the political class struggle, favour the way the field of political class struggle is itself structured (13).

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### Acknowledgements

My thanks to Saul Dubow for his comments on a previous draft of this case study.

### Notes and References

1. Hall, S. 1977: "Culture, Media and the Ideological Effect" in Curran, J. : Mass Communication and Society. Oxford University Press, p. 332
2. Ibid. p. 333
3. Ibid. p. 338
4. Legassick, M. 1974: "Capital Accumulation and Violence". Economy and Society, Vol. 1, No. 2

5. Crucial to the notion of hegemony is that in the last instance, when co-optation by ideological means is unsuccessful, the state enforces the dominant ideology by means of violence and repression. This is clearly illustrated by the events which led on from the Koornhof incident at Wits. This incident together with the subsequent flag-burning were the result of combined action by militant black and white students. These comparatively minor acts represented a threat to the hegemonic stability as the "colour barriers" necessary for the continuation of white hegemony were being breached. The state thus immediately retaliated by using riot police on the Wits campus followed by a spate of detentions and then banning orders. (It is significant that Wits University spokesmen have denied that students were involved in the flag-burning incident. Following this incident, the government threatened legislation to prevent such behaviour. This was published in the Government Gazette in August in the Republic of South Africa Constitution Second Amendment Bill which makes provision for penalties of up to R10 000 or 5 years imprisonment for anyone found guilty of spoiling or destroying the national flag, or holding it in contempt or removing without authorization the flag from any place in which it is displayed in accordance with instructions by a state authority. The severity of these measures underlies the crisis of confidence the government and ruling ideology has in its own hegemony. (Editor)
6. Althusser, L. 1971: Reading Capital. NLB, London
7. Murdock, G. 1974: "Political Deviance: The Press Presentation of a Militant Mass Demonstration" in Cohen, S. and Young, J.: The Manufacture of News. Constable, London.
8. Hall, S. 1972: "The Determinations of Newsphotographs", Cultural Studies 3. University of Birmingham
9. Hall, 1977 op. cit. p. 68
10. Barthes, R. 1973: Mythologies. Paladin, London
11. Helen Suzman is the PFP member for Houghton and is one of the government's staunchest critics.
12. Helen Suzman as used by the English press signifies a myth - the myth of a determined and fearless (yet principled) voice against apartheid. Therefore the implied meaning of the quotation is that if such a source of opposition denounces the students then their action is undoubtably outside the bounds of legitimacy

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### New Coin Poetry

The first of two issues of the 1981 volume of the above will be published before the end of 1981. This series will have a new appearance and new editor Robert Greig and will be priced at R1.25 per issue (or R2.50 per annum for 2 issues).

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## Theories of Authorship

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Editor: John Caughie

Published by Routledge and Kegan Paul  
in association with the British Film  
Institute, 1981. 316pp.

Price: Approx: R14.20

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The figure of the author has been central in film theory and criticism over the past thirty years. In the second volume of the BFI Readers in Film Studies, John Caughie documents the major stages in the debate about film authorship, and introduces recent writing on film to suggest important ways in which the debate might be reconsidered.

Since the fifties, much of the significant critical writing on cinema has developed within a conception of art which sees the 'auteur' as a creative and self-expressive figure; more recently, theories of subjectivity and textuality have disturbed this view by throwing into question the centrality of the author in the text. *Theories of Authorship* points to the continuing importance of the issues which are at stake. By tracing certain continuities of concern, most notably the various ways in which John Ford is discussed, the collection of essays and extracts provides points of orientation and focus within the debate; and by introducing writing from outside the literature of film (Barthes, Macherey, and Foucault for example) and from outside the traditional grounds on which the debate has been staged, it proposes a wider theoretical field in which the question of authorship can be rethought.

John Caughie's editorial commentary examines the contributions to the debate and guides the reader towards a new perspective on authorship and film theory.

From the flyleaf