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ANC VOTES IN 'SECRECY BILL'

The fight goes on

Gaye Davis
Political Bureau

THIS is just the start of the fight. That was the vow made by opponents of the Protection of State Information Bill yesterday after ANC MPs used their majority in the National Assembly to approve it, despite a concerted fight by opposition MPs who made up for their lack of numbers by exploiting the rule book in a bid to defeat the bill.

The vote tally was 229 votes in favour, while opposition MPs mustered 107 votes against. There were two abstentions – one of them by an ANC MP, Gloria Borman, the other by the United Democratic Movement's Stanley Ntshane.

MPs took their seats as protesters gathered at the gates of Parliament to register their protest and pickets took place across the country.

Members of the SA National Editors' Forum – editors of the country's major print and broadcast media – sat in the public gallery, dressed in black to mark what the National Press Club had dubbed "Black Tuesday".

When the result of the vote was announced, they rose as one and left. Journalists cleared the Press Gallery as ANC MPs applauded and shouted: "Bye, bye."

Defeat political footwork by the DA in concert with the IFP, Cope, the ACDP and FF+ saw the ANC caught on the back foot by an initial bid to have proceedings postponed, but the effect only delayed the inevitable and saw ANC chief whip Mathole Motshekga told by the Speaker, Max Sisulu, that he was not allowed to make speeches when he stood to object.

Parties were allowed three minutes each to make declarations setting out their opposition.

Boos and howls from ANC MPs met DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko when she said it was "a dark day" for the country's young democracy. "If passed, this bill will unstick the very fabric of our constitution. It will criminalise the freedoms that so many of our people fought for."

"What will you, the members on that side of the house, tell your grandchildren? I know you will tell them that you fought for freedom. But will you also tell them you helped to destroy it? Because they will pay the price for your actions. Let this weigh heavy on your conscience," she said.

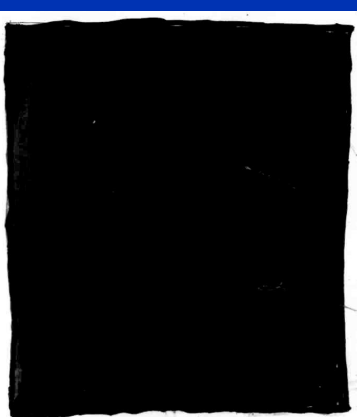
"I shudder to think that the men and women who say money is being stolen will be locked up in the name of the ANC," said Cope leader and former ANC national chairman and defence minister, Mosiuoa Lekota. "I am ashamed... (we) will not vote for this legislation," he said. The ANC was creating "exactly the same situation" those who fought apartheid had confronted, when patriots were locked up and criminalised for saying what was wrong with the apartheid state.

"You don't have to be a foreign spy to oppose this legislation," said the PAC's Letlapa Mphahlele, warning it would turn the country into a "banana republic".

Calling on Zuma not to sign the bill, the IFP's Mario Ambrosini said Parliament was acting against the will of the people.

"What emerges out of this... is the arrogance of power. You are killing the messenger because you

CRACK OF DAWN



Information on which today's Crack of Dawn is based has unfortunately been classified.



Dario Schwörer, his wife, Sabine, and their two-year-old son, Noe, relax on Pachamama in Durban. The family of six have been travelling the world on the boat, working with schools and youngsters on solutions to climate change problems.

Swiss family Schwörer sail into Durbs on nature's steam

Colleen Dardagan

A 10-YEAR dream to sail into the port where the annual climate change talks are under way has finally come true for a Swiss family of six, whose lives are spent sailing the oceans and climbing the world's highest peaks, while finding the best solutions to save the planet.

Once completed, the Top to Top expedition would have achieved a world record by being the first to travel all climate zones, crossing seven seas to the seven highest summits using only nature's power. "We have done this to set an example of what can be done by living in harmony with our climate and to share the climate solutions with schools and universities along the way," said expedition leader Dario Schwörer.

"It has always been our dream to be in the same city as the COP17 talks of the UN Framework Conven-

tion on Climate Change), but it was never possible before because we were on different ends of the planet (from where the meetings were being held). We are very excited to be here in Durban."

With only two more mountains to climb, one in Alaska and the highest peak in North America, the travellers – Schwörer, his wife, Sabine, and their four children, who were all born on the expedition – have sailed 42 613 nautical miles, climbed more than 400 000 vertical metres, cycled more than 18 000 km and visited more than 50 000 students across the planet. Their two-year-old son, Noe, was the youngest person to make base camp on Mount Everest.

Their boat, Pachamama, the Incan word for Mother Earth, is equipped with 11 solar panels and two wind turbines, and Schwörer says the family's lives are lived according to the rhythm of nature.

"We arrive in a country and leave when we feel our work is done, and the weather and tides are favourable," said Schwörer.

He said it was important for everyone to start finding solutions to climate change, rather than just pointing out the negative things.

"We don't want to point out what's going wrong, but rather give good examples and solutions to inspire children in schools."

Perhaps the best story told by the family is when their first child, six-year-old Salina, was born in Patagonia and they had to use a Swiss army knife to cut her umbilical cord.

"Our boat hit a container off the South American coast and was badly damaged. We did not have any sponsors then, so we knew no one would

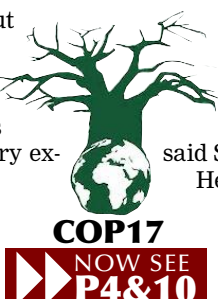
come to our aid. It took us two weeks to limp into port and then two years, Sabine working as a nurse and I as a mountain guide, to keep ourselves going while trying to get the boat repaired."

"It was during this time that Salina was born. Victorinox, the manufacturers of the Swiss army knife, somehow got to hear about it and immediately offered to sponsor us. They were the first. We are now sponsored by the Swiss government, SGS (which provides inspec-

tion, testing, certification and verification services to ensure that products, services and systems meet quality, safety and performance standards.)"

While the family are still waiting for an invitation to the UN conference and to get recognition for the expedition's work, they are one of the few who have arrived in Durban using only the wind and sun to power their journey.

To arrange for school visits, visit www.toptotop.org



The parliamentary circus comes to town

KRISTEN VAN SCHIE

OH, WHAT a circus. Oh, what a show. Oh, what an afternoon in Parliament.

"Nooooo," cried one side. "Ayyyyyy," chanted the other. "Order! Order please!" shouted the Speaker, Max Sisulu.

And South Africa noticed. "Parliament: (noun) the national version of the Boswell Wilkie Circus," wrote one tweeter, Lady Lollen. "Clowns, animals and tricks included for free."

"Parliament is out of hand," agreed Mabusha Matseba. "It's worse than drunk people having an argument @ 5am about who is sober or not."

For every three minute bell ahead of voting came a mass vacating of seats, followed by pleas from Sisulu to return. "You can't vote standing. Please take your seats. Honourable members..." And then came the heckling, the bickering,



IFP MP Mario Ambrosini missed the vote because nature called.

the petty swipes. From both sides. "Those against the bill are wearing black, but it appears that many ANC members themselves are actually black," joked IFP chief whip Koos van der Merwe.

After a Pieter Mulder slip of

tongue, the ANC leapt towards the microphone to discuss "regular erections".

"Honourable member" jokes abounded.

When the public was granted entry into the half-full gallery, ANC

MP Yolanda Botha kicked up a fuss at their applause for opposition statements. Sisulu agreed with her.

"Who stole the ANC?" tweeted City Press editor Ferial Haffajee. "Who were those heckling, disingenuous people? Those cavaliers who killed free expression today?"

But then, at least the heckling, joking, shouting, clapping MPs were there.

"62 MPs apparently didn't feel the need to be in Parliament today," wrote one tweeter, Vanessa Banton. "That leaves a sour taste in my mouth. #BlackTuesday."

IFP MP Mario Ambrosini missed the vote.

Asked why his name was absent from the voting minutes, which lists the name of every MP, he told The Mercury that he was "probably in the toilet".

After his ablations, he had gone to do an interview with eNews.

His vote would not have made "much difference", he said.

MERCURY SPECIALS

THE 2011 festive season edition of the popular Eating Out with Anne Stevens guide appears on Friday and has a green theme to celebrate the opening of the COP17 climate change talks at Durban's ICC on Monday.

THE 2011 KZN School Scrapbook appears in The Mercury tomorrow. It's an annual brag book in which KZN schools have a chance to boast about achievements during the year.

See what's happening at schools in our province by reading the KZN School Scrapbook in The Mercury tomorrow.

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