

# Media 1, Parliament 0

 By Chris Moerdyk: @chrismoerdyk <sup>25 Aug 2010</sup>

What is it that so many members of parliament don't understand about Parliament? Take this SABC circus, for example.



The Portfolio Committee on Communication was supposed to hear what the SABC board had to say for itself this week and decided that, because someone involved might face legal action if what was going to be said was made public, to hold the hearings in secret. Behind closed doors. In camera.

## How dare you?

Quite rightly, the media, representing the people of South Africa, threw a hissy fit and went off to the high court where they succeeded in an injunction forcing the hearings to be held in public.

What the portfolio committee MPs don't seem to understand is that Parliament is supposed to be open to the public. The National Assembly is open to the public and is even televised. This is what happens in parliamentary democracies.

## Right to access!!!!!!

I wouldn't be surprised if this public access to parliament isn't printed in bold in our Constitution and underlined with red ink with a big exclamation mark.

The portfolio committees are part of the National Assembly. Their hearings have, to my knowledge, always been open to the public.

Now, the whole SABC thing has been put on hold for heaven knows how long while the Portfolio Committee on Communication goes and has a chat to the Speaker of the National Assembly, and presumably a chief whip or two, to see what can be done about holding these hearings in secret. Sod the high court ruling.

## Hey, it's our Parliament

This makes a mockery of not only Parliament, but also what portfolio committees are all about. Because what they are all about is to summon errant state institutions and ask them on OUR behalf just what the heck they think they are playing at.

Holding these hearings in secret is like a doctor trying to find what's making me sick but refusing to let me present in his consulting room. It's ludicrous.

Equally ludicrous is wanting to hold hearings in secret because someone might be compromised from a legal point of view. Well, tough titty, I say - anyone who has done something wrong and might be

compromised deserves to have legal action against them.

## Vague compatibility

The complete and utter shambles in which the SABC finds itself is not only of its own making. Parliament should take responsibility for not having done its job properly in terms of appointing a board and chairman who actually stood a remote chance of getting on with each other.

The SABC has become an embarrassment to this country. And it is time that politicians stopped playing th infantile games with this valuable asset and our money.

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## ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK: @CHRISMOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public af for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Em Chris on [moerdykc@gmail.com](mailto:moerdykc@gmail.com) and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).  
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