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# Press freedom

the Press to support either Communism per se, or the South African Communist Party in particular.

\* Though the IFP would condemn the promotion of any form of racialism, we do not think we have the right to prohibit others from propagating racially - exclusive Party politics. Similarly, we would not ban any radical political movements - to the left or the right - provided they operate within the bounds of the Common Law, the future Constitution and Bill of Rights - and always provided they do not promote violence.

\* The IFP rejects State control of the Press. Because the Press sells information to a market, we reject the idea that the Press must fulfill a role defined by the State. But though the IFP itself stands in the liberal tradition as far as Press freedom is concerned, this is not to say that the IFP supports an irresponsible and non-accountable approach.

\* The liberal tradition is that of a vibrant and independent Press responding to the needs of a segmented market. It is the

owners, editors and readers who determine their inter-relationship. The Press should therefore be accountable to the people it serves. Their decision to support a particular newspaper charges the paper with the responsibility of serving its constituency. It is power to the people - as consumers.

Newspapers exercise responsibility through constraints such as national security, the laws of libel and defamation, the mores of morality and a host of media-related legislation. These restrict what a newspaper should not do, rather than define what it should. No-one should pretend that the liberal route is the easiest. It is not always easy to strike a balance between freedom of expression and pornography, hatred and blasphemy.

\* The IFP therefore supports the concept of a Media Council to which aggrieved parties can turn. Such a body, acting as an ombudsman, can encourage the Media to report factually, make them retract false statements and urge them to uphold minimum standards.

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## Left-wing intimidation exposed

First-person accounts documented by the independent South African Institute of Race Relations have confirmed the widespread intimidation of Black journalists who do not "toe" the political line...

**T**he Institute says radical left-wing groups have taken over from the Government in stifling Press freedom.

The claim is made in the Institute's recently-launched book, "Mau-Mauing the Media: New Censorship for new South Africa."

The book cites the example of the IFP-owned newspaper, *Ilanga*, as typical of the type of intimidation that is taking place.

It says the circulation of the Durban-based *Ilanga* dropped by about 23,000 after shopkeepers who sold it were attacked. People who were caught reading the newspaper were forced to eat it and

sometimes threatened with death.

The book contains transcripts of discussions at an Institute seminar attended by senior Black journalists.

Says the Institute: "They indicated that in recent years, this 'alternative' censorship has been fierce enough to block the publication of much that happened in the country's Black townships."

According to the book, journalists were supported when jailed by the State, but blacklisted when they criticised the Left. Senior political reporter at *The Johannesburg Star*, Kaiser Nyatsumba, said censorship from the Left was worse because it was never reported.

White liberals also came in for criticism at a function to launch the new book. Black journalists accused them of being reluctant to criticise liberation movements for fear of having their credentials questioned.

The English Press in South Africa was hammered for being "sycophantic" towards the ANC for the past seven years.