



REPORT

OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND
BROADCASTING SERVICES**

FOR THE

**FIFTH SESSION OF THE NINTH
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY APPOINTED ON 19 JANUARY 2006**



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Item	Page
1.	Membership	1
2.	Functions of the Committee	1
3.	Meetings of the Committee	1
4.	Consideration of Topical Issues	2
5.	Procedure Adopted	2
6.	Summary of Submissions	3
7.	Observations and Recommendations	7
PART TWO		
8.	Consideration of Action Taken Report	8
	8.1 Taxes on Media Equipment	8
	8.2 Independent Broadcasting Authority Act	8
	8.3 Stand Off with Cable Satellite Technologies Limited	9
9.	Tour to Isoka, Luangwa and Chipata	9
	9.1 Access to Information	9
	9.2 Vernacular Newspapers	9
	9.3 Television and Radio Reception	10
	9.4 Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation Regional Office	10
	9.5 Restructuring of the Ministry	11
10.	Study of Government Strategy on Film Censorship	11
	10.1 Review the Theatres and Cinematology Act	11
	10.2 Censorship Board	11
11.	Study on Government Strategy on the Promotion of Local Films	12
	11.1 Television Levies	12
12.	Tour to Multichoice Africa in South Africa	12
	12.1 Local Content Quota Systems	12
13.	Study on Copyright Protection in Zambia	13
14.	Study on Operations of the Zambia Printing Company	13
15.	Conclusion	14

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING SERVICES FOR THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE NINTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY APPOINTED ON 19 JANUARY 2006

Consisting of:

Mr A Haakaloba, MP (Chairperson), Mr C W Kakoma, MP, Ms C Namugala, MP, Mr M Mubika, MP, Mr P M Zulu, MP, Mr C R Banda, MP, Princess Nakatindi Wina, MP and Mr E P Kavindele, MP

Following the appointment of Ms C Namugala, MP as Deputy Minister, Office of the Vice President, the membership of your Committee was reduced to seven (7).

The Honourable Mr Speaker
National Assembly
Parliament Buildings
LUSAKA

Sir

Your Committee have the honour to present their 2006 report for the Fifth Session of the Ninth National Assembly.

Functions of the Committee

2.0 The duties of your Committee are to:

- (i) study and report on the mandate, management and operations of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services, its departments and/or agencies. They also carry out any other duties assigned or referred to them by the House pertaining to the activities of the Ministry, departments and/or agencies under their portfolio;
- (ii) carry out detailed investigation or scrutiny of certain activities being undertaken by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services, departments and/or agencies under its portfolio and make appropriate recommendations to the House for ultimate consideration by the Government;
- (iii) make, if considered necessary, recommendations to the Government on the need to review certain policies and/or certain existing legislation; and
- (iv) consider Bills that may be referred to them by the House.

Meetings of the Committee

3.0 Your Committee held nine meetings during the period under review.

Your Committee's Report is in two parts. Part One comprises the topical issue on which your Committee undertook a detailed study while Part Two is on the consideration of the Action Taken Report on your Committee's Report for 2005.

PART ONE

TOPICAL ISSUE

PRESS FREEDOM IN ZAMBIA: IS IT REALISTIC?

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

4.0 In the recent past, there has been controversy between the Government on the one hand, and the media institutions and opposition political parties on the other hand, over the need for media law reforms.

One argument for media law reform has been that without a law guaranteeing freedom of information, there can not be press freedom. To this effect, various stakeholders have advocated for the introduction of the Freedom of Information Bill in the National Assembly. It has been argued that there can not be freedom of expression without press (media) freedom being guaranteed.

It was for this reason that your Committee undertook a study on the issue of press freedom in the country so as to establish whether or not it is realistic under the current legal and institutional frameworks.

Your Committee sought to delve into the following specific questions in order to determine whether or not, in fact, press freedom in Zambia is realistic:

- (i) what does press freedom entail?
- (ii) does press freedom exist in Zambia? and
- (iii) what are the major obstacles to the full realisation of press freedom in Zambia?

PROCEDURE ADOPTED

5.0 To assist them in their study, your Committee identified and requested submissions from the following stakeholders:

- (i) the Chairperson, Zambia Episcopal Conference;
- (ii) the Managing Director, Radio Phoenix;
- (iii) the Secretary-General, Council of Churches in Zambia;
- (iv) the Chairperson, Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Zambia;
- (v) the Chairperson, Non-Governmental Organisation Coordinating Committee (NGOCC);
- (vi) the Managing Director, Zambia Daily Mail;

- (vii) the Managing Director, Times of Zambia;
- (viii) the Chairperson, Press Freedom Committee of The Post Newspaper; and
- (ix) the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services.

SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS BY STAKEHOLDERS

a) Press Freedom: Definition

6.0 Your Committee were informed that there was no single definition of press (media) freedom commanding universal acceptance or application. While some societies considered press freedom as the extent to which the press or media operated free from any encumbrances capable of compromising its ability to disseminate fair, accurate and objective information to the public, others felt that press freedom entailed the degree of freedom from restraint which was essential to enable proprietors, editors and journalists advance public interest by publishing the facts and opinions without which a democratic society could not make responsible judgments.

Others viewed press freedom as the guarantee, by a government, of a free public press for its citizens and their associations, extended to members of news gathering organizations, and their published reporting. It also extended to news gathering, and processes involved in obtaining information for public distribution. It implied that people should have the right to express themselves in writing or in any other way of expression of personal opinion or creativity.

However, the most popular view of what press freedom is and entails is one expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which indicates that *“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinion without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of the frontiers”*.

This philosophy of press freedom is usually accompanied by legislation ensuring various degrees of freedom of scientific research (known as scientific freedom), publishing, press and printing. The depth to which these laws are entrenched in a country’s legal system can include provision in its constitution. The concept of freedom of speech is often covered by the same laws as freedom of the press, thereby giving equal treatment to the media and individuals.

Besides the said legal environment, some non-governmental organisations use more criteria to judge the level of press freedom around the world. One international media organisation, Reporters Without Borders, considers the number of journalists murdered, expelled or harassed, and the existence of a state monopoly on TV and radio, as well as the existence of censorship and self-censorship in the media, and the overall independence of the media as well as the difficulties that foreign reporters may face. Freedom House, another international media organisation, likewise takes into account, the general political and economic environments of each nation in order to determine

whether there exists relationships of dependence that limit, in practice, the level of press freedom that might exist in theory. Thus, according to them, the concept of independence of the press is one closely linked with the concept of press freedom.

The notion of the press as the fourth branch of government is sometimes used to compare the press (or media) with Montesquieu's three branches of government, namely, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Edmund Burke is quoted to have said: "*Three Estates in Parliament; but in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth estate more important far than they all*".

However, regardless of the standpoint that one takes, there are certain common trends through which the free press passes. Some of these are:

- (i) *The existence or absence of an unambiguous and explicitly constitutional provision where a written constitution exists guaranteeing protection of the right of journalists to pursue their duties diligently without any hindrance.*

Your Committee learnt that, in the case of the United States of America, the media enjoys almost unparalleled protection entrenched in the First Amendment to the American Constitution, 1791, which states in part that:

"Congress shall make no law....abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press;...."

It is clear that founding fathers of the United States laid down the foundation for a free and democratic country, which they believed could only be realised if there was press freedom to ensure free flow of information, and thereby guaranteeing transparency and accountability.

In the South African Constitution, press freedom is guaranteed in the following words:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:-

- (a) *freedom of the press and other media*"

This right is restricted to only very little circumstances relating to propaganda, violence or advocacy of hatred.

In Zambia, however, press freedom is not expressly provided for in the Republican Constitution. It is merely implied from the Freedom of Expression provided for in Article 20(1) which states that: "*Except with his own consent, a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to impart and communicate ideas and information without*

interference, whether the communication be to the public generally or to any person or class of persons, and freedom from interference with his correspondence”.

Although Article 20 (2) of the Zambian Constitution makes reference to press freedom by stating that: “*Subject to the provisions of this constitution, a law shall not make any provision that derogates from freedom of the press,*” there are numerous derogations in Article 20(3) to the effect that nothing contained in or done under the authority of any law shall be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention of Article 20 to the extent that it is shown that the law in question makes provision:

1. *that is reasonably required in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health; or*
2. *that it is reasonably required for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons or the private lives of persons concerned in legal proceedings, preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, maintaining the authority and independence of the courts, regulating educational institutions in the interests of persons receiving instruction therein, or the registration of, or regulating technical administration or the technical operation of, newspapers and other publications, telephone, posts, wireless broadcasting or television; or*
3. *that imposes restrictions upon public officers and except so far as the provision or, the thing done under the authority thereof as the case may be, is shown not to be reasonably justifiable in a democratic society”.*

The net import of these derogations is that whatever the Constitution purports to grant in Article 20 (2) is at the same time denied in Article 20 (3).

- (ii) *Access to information held by official establishments, i.e. Government Ministries and departments, public and private corporations*

Your Committee heard that most governments tend to conceal information from public purview, and the standard excuse often advanced was that such information was “**TOP SECRET**”.

Ostensibly, this reason is often advanced merely to keep prying eyes at bay even when disclosure of information being sought is in the public interest and should not be classified as such. The negative effect, which stems from this practice, is that there is lack of transparency in government operations, which leads to corruption going on unabated. It

is for this reason that some societies have taken measures to circumscribe Government behaviour by limiting the extent of secrecy.

In the United States of America and the Republic of South Africa, specific legislation has been considered desirable in order to guarantee access to information not only for journalists but the public at large. In the United States, such access has been made possible by the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act, 1966, which, in principle, enables any citizen gain access to any information in the public domain, with narrow exceptions for privacy. This piece of legislation empowers any citizen who is denied access to information in the public interest to seek legal remedies. It, thus, rests on the court to determine whether or not the information should be classified as **Secret** and, therefore, outside the purview of the public.

(b) **Whether or not Press Freedom exists in Zambia**

Almost all the stakeholders that appeared before your Committee seemed divided on this issue. While some were of the view that press freedom exist unequivocally, most were of the view that it does not exist.

Those who argued against premised their argument on the following basis:

- (i) in spite of the new political dispensation embraced in 1991, following the reintroduction of multi-party politics, the legal reform has lagged far behind political reforms. Statute books are replete with archaic and repressive pieces of legislation inherited from colonial administrations which are incompatible with the new democratic set-up;
- (ii) Courts of law mete out punitive sanctions against newspapers for perceived transgressions committed by various publishers found guilty of libel or defamation of character; the situation becomes particularly difficult in the period preceding national elections as rival politicians trade insults and attack one another, usually in highly inflammatory, crude and intemperate language; in the end, it is the publishers who are held culpable for whatever is published; in some cases, defamation has been criminalised, thereby impeding the freedom with which the journalists ought to operate in their duties;
- (iii) Government has been reluctant and has, in fact, failed to re-introduce the Freedom of Information Bill in the National Assembly which would have ensured, to a large extent, protection of information gathering institutions in their quest to access information held by the public; and
- (iv) Government's reaction to the recommendations of Board members of the Independent Broadcasting Authority is a big blow on press freedom and confirms media institutions' fears that Government still wishes to continue with the status quo.

Those who argued that press freedom existed in Zambia felt that, since freedom of expression entailed press freedom and was provided for under the Bill of Rights in the Republican Constitution, a good amount of press freedom exists.

The only issue was that democracy in the country was still ‘young’ and therefore, press freedom needed to be nurtured as democracy continues to grow. They argued further that there was nowhere in the world where absolute freedom of the press existed unfettered.

COMMITTEE’S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Your Committee observe that an active press is essential in the education of the citizenry both within and outside the country. In order to be able to work freely, the press must be free from control by the State. Your Committee note that former United States President, Thomas Jefferson, who himself suffered great calumnies of the press, put it succinctly that a government that cannot stand up to criticism deserves to fall. He stated further to the effect that people ought to be governed by reason and truth and, therefore, the objective of any government should be to leave open to them (the people) all avenues of the truth.

Your Committee observe that it is important to recognise the fact that the press will not be free unless and until certain minimum benchmarks are met. Your Committee note that in Zambia, the Penal Code has at least thirteen sections that directly affect press freedom, chief among them being section 53-“Prohibited Publications,” which empowers the President to ban publications in the national interest; Section 69 – “Defamation of the President,” which is punishable by up to three years imprisonment; and section 60 – “Seditious intention,” which makes it an offence to ‘incite disaffection against the Government.”

Your Committee observe that none of these provisions have been modified despite Government pronouncements of a free press since the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in 1991. As a matter of fact, personnel of privately owned media institutions that are highly critical of the Government have encountered serious harassment and intimidation and have been subjected to numerous criminal charges under the Penal Code.

In addition, the State Security Act has been used in the past to punish legitimate investigative information and to suppress discussion of public affairs. The press ought to be protected in its duties. They cannot work without fear or favour under the prevailing circumstances in Zambia.

Further, your Committee observe that democracy entails and demands accountability and transparency of the governors. Access to information is critical to the existence of a free press. Only non-democratic governments continue to restrict access to information purely for their continued existence. To this end, they will employ state-run news organisations to promote the propaganda critical to maintaining an existing political power base and suppress (often very brutally, through the police, military or intelligence agencies) any significant attempts by the media or individual journalists to challenge the “government line” on contentious issues.

In this regard, your Committee urges Government that, in order to enhance press (media) freedom in the country, the following should be considered:

- (i) re-introduction of the Freedom of Information Bill (FOB) in the National Assembly;

- (ii) reconsideration of its position on privatising state-run press institutions;
- (iii) implementation in full of the ZNBC Act and the IBA Act of 2002;
- (iv) modification/amendment of all laws impeding press freedom in Zambia, especially those in the Penal Code; and
- (v) ensuring that the constitutional provisions in the Mung'omba Draft Constitution are maintained and implemented.

PART TWO

CONSIDERATION OF THE ACTION TAKEN REPORT ON THE OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE'S REPORT FOR 2005

8.0 Your previous Committee had made observations on radio and television coverage; the need to support institutions such as the Media Trust Fund by way of reduction of duties; the operationalisation of the IBA and the provision of satellite television services.

Your Committee had, therefore, made recommendations on the following:

8.1 Taxes on media Equipment

That the Government should waive or reduce taxes on media equipment and other requisites in order to promote growth of the sub-sector.

It was submitted by the Permanent Secretary that there was no policy to waive duty on imported broadcasting equipment. However, different cases were treated on their own merit by the Ministry of Finance and National Planning when those importing the equipment requested a waiver. Unless and until Government made a policy to waive the duties and taxes as was done with the transport sector, each case would be treated on its own merit.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In noting the submission, your Committee urges the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services to initiate waiver proposals of duty on imported broadcasting equipment to the Ministry of Finance and National Planning.

8.2 Independent Broadcasting Authority Act

That the Government should urgently implement the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act in full to enhance freedom of information.

The Permanent Secretary, in response, submitted that the implementation of the IBA Act in full was dependent on the outcome of the court case in the Supreme Court. It was the Court's decision that would dictate whether to take the names of the proposed Board members to Parliament so that the Board could start functioning or to restart the process of appointing new ones. Until this matter was resolved, the Ministry could not make the appropriate appointments or operationalise the Act without the Board.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

Your Committee request the Permanent Secretary to furnish them with a progress report on the court action.

8.3 Stand Off With Cable Satellite Technologies Limited

That the Government should urgently resolve the stand-off between Cable Satellite Technologies Limited (CASAT) and Government for the benefit of the rural communities and in accordance with the open sky policy.

The Permanent Secretary submitted that the Ministry of Justice had advised that the two parties should go for mediation.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee request the Permanent Secretary to furnish them with a progress report on the mediation outcome.

TOUR REPORT TO ISOKA, LUANGWA AND CHIPATA DISTRICTS: 4 – 12 SEPTEMBER 2005

9.0 Your previous Committee had made observations and recommendations on their tour to Isoka, Luangwa and Chipata on the following:

9.1 Access to Information

That the rural populace had for a long time longed for access to information and Government had done very little to assist them. As a result, communities, especially in border areas, had been exposed to foreign values through listening to foreign radio stations. This was detrimental to the Zambian children.

In response, the Permanent Secretary submitted that the Ministry appreciated the difficulties encountered by rural communities in accessing information provided by the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation through its programmes due to poor reception. The Ministry also understood the dangers involved in having some Zambian communities listening to foreign radio stations.

He stated that although radio coverage was not yet 100 per cent, the line of rail and provincial centres were covered by FM transmitters whilst the rest of the country was covered by short-wave (SW) transmissions. In terms of SW transmissions, the country was indeed well covered but in terms of FM radio coverage, this was limited to Lusaka, the Coperbelt and other Provincial Headquarters.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee urge the Ministry to address the poor radio and television reception and state what practical steps will be taken, and when, to resolve the problem in rural areas.

9.2 Vernacular Newspapers

That there was need to revisit the distribution of vernacular newspapers so that readership was widened.

The Permanent Secretary submitted that it was the desire of the Ministry and Government as a whole to see that vernacular papers were distributed and circulated as widely as possible to reach the village level. The problem in the past had been that of lack of transport in the Ministry.

However, the Ministry was working out a distribution plan which would see offices of the District Commissioners involved in the distribution of the vernacular newspapers. The Zambia News and Information Services (ZANIS) had also been given motorcycles as a way of addressing the transport concern, especially in rural areas.

It should also be appreciated that for a long time now the District Information Officers had suffered neglect largely due to poor funding. This had resulted in them operating without vehicles and with obsolete communication technology, and often without telephone facilities.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee urge the Ministry to make use of the ZANIS offices at district levels to distribute vernacular newspapers to enhance accountability as opposed to the District Commissioners.

9.3 Television and Radio Reception

With regard to television and radio reception in Chipata, your Committee had not been clear why ZNBC put their equipment on the minor Kanjala hill and not the major hill which was higher and had, therefore, recommended that ZNBC and ZAMTEL should revisit the matter. The relocation would definitely improve the reception in the entire Eastern Province.

In his response, the Permanent Secretary submitted that Chipata had been a very difficult place in terms of geographical terrain for TV coverage because it was surrounded by many hills. Before the transmitter was moved to Kanjala hill, many people resident beyond the immediate surrounding hills could not receive TV signals. At the time of relocating to the existing site, ZNBC took into consideration electricity supply both from ZESCO and the standby generator as well as availability of TV signals. ZAMTEL, who were the carriers of the ZNBC TV signal, were already located on the hill and in order to maintain the quality of TV signal, the ZNBC transmitter needed to be near the ZAMTEL terminal equipment.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee urge the Ministry to state categorically what practical steps it was taking to solve the problem of television and radio reception in Chipata.

9.4 Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation Regional Office

Your Committee had been saddened by the bad state in which the ZNBC regional office building was. They urged ZNBC management to urgently rehabilitate the building that was falling apart.

In response, the Permanent Secretary submitted that the Chipata Regional Office building was very old and actually needed to be replaced. ZNBC only intended to carry out minor repairs and consider including the construction of a new building in the corporation's future budget.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee request the Permanent Secretary to furnish them with a progress report on the matter.

9.5 Restructuring of the Ministry

The restructuring exercise of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services that started in 2001 had taken a very long time to complete. As a result, this had caused a lot of anxiety among staff in the Ministry's departments. Your Committee, therefore, had recommended that the Ministry should urgently liaise with relevant authorities so that the restructuring process was expedited and that members of staff who would not be included in the new structure were advised accordingly.

The Permanent Secretary, in response, stated that the Ministry had written to the Public Service Management Division (PSMD) requesting that they write to those not placed in the restructuring of the headquarters and had made recommendations of officers to be considered for vacant positions before advertising. Discussions were in progress with the PSMD and the Public Service Commission on how best to expeditiously resolve this matter.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee request the Permanent Secretary to furnish them with a progress report.

STUDY OF GOVERNMENT STRATEGY ON FILM CENSORSHIP

10.0 Your previous Committee had noted the recommendations made by its predecessor that had observed that despite rapid changes in broadcasting, telecommunications and information technology, censorship was still a necessary practice.

The recommendations of your previous Committee were as follows:

10.1 Review the Theatres and Cinematography Act

That the Theatres and Cinematography Act, Cap 158 of the Laws of Zambia should, as a matter of urgency, be reviewed in its entirety in order to bring it in line with the current liberalised industry.

The Permanent Secretary responded that the Ministry had made progress in the review of the Law. A Cabinet Memorandum had been prepared and circulated to line ministries on the proposed new Public Exhibition and Entertainment Act and a layman's draft Bill had been prepared.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee observe that this matter has been outstanding for a very long time. They urge the Ministry to deal with the matter expeditiously.

10.2 Censorship Board

That the Censorship Board should be provided with the necessary resources, such as full time manpower and transport, for them to be able to attend to censorship

matters on a daily basis. The new Act should make provision for the establishment of a Chief Executive or a Co-ordinator to implement measures promulgated by the Board under the Act.

In his response, the Permanent Secretary stated that the Ministry had taken note of the recommendation and would examine the feasibility of having such an entity as the Board operated like any other Board or Committee established in the Ministry and had no offices, staff or transport of its own. Depending on availability of funds, the recommendation would be considered.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee feel strongly that the Ministry should consider implementing the recommendations relating to the provision of a Chief Executive Officer or Coordinator of the Censorship Board.

STUDY OF GOVERNMENT STRATEGY ON THE PROMOTION OF LOCAL FILMS

11.0 In noting the observations and recommendations made by the previous Committee and their concern that, despite the numerous social and economic benefits that could have been accrued from developing the local film industry, the Government had not risen to the challenge, your previous Committee had made observations and recommendations as follows:

11.1 Television Levies

That regardless of the amounts realised from television levies, ZNBC should spend a small percentage on the local film industry to stimulate growth in the film industry.

In reply, the Permanent Secretary submitted that the Ministry had already identified all the actors in the film industry and had started rendering financial support to them by way of hosting film festivals and other related activities.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee insist that a small percentage of the licence fees be dedicated to the development of the local film industry.

TOUR TO MULTICHOICE AFRICA IN SOUTH AFRICA

12.0 On the basis of the observations and recommendations made by the predecessor Committee from their tour of Multi-Choice Africa in South Africa, your previous Committee had made observations and recommendations as follows:

12.1 Local Content Quota Systems

That your Committee were of the view that the local content quota system would encourage and enhance the capacity of local artists once introduced. They, therefore, urged Government and ZNBC to consider introducing a local content quota system on a pilot basis.

In reply, the Permanent Secretary stated that Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) was already doing the commissioning. He gave the example of a contract signed with Picture Perfect Productions for the production of the Kabanana Soap Opera, which stopped due to lack of funding.

The Corporation was also discussing with the producers of Bupilo and others to see how ZNBC could be of assistance.

The issue of local content quotas was an issue of regulation and once the IBA came into effect, it would be in a position to set up quotas for various content on public media. In the meantime, ZNBC had introduced local language TV for specified times and hoped to increase local language TV hours next year. Through this introduction of local languages, much interest had been generated and talent was being discussed. The Corporation was also working with the Evelyn Hone College Journalism Section by providing a platform for their productions in news and other programmes such as “THE REPORTER”.

COMMITTEE’S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee recommended that the issue of the IBA should be resolved urgently.

STUDY ON COPYRIGHT PROTECTION IN ZAMBIA

13.0 Your previous Committee had commended Government for the efforts made by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services in curbing piracy. They had also urged Government to complete the review of the law of copyright as quickly as possible so as to achieve better results in the protection of copyright.

Following a submission by the Permanent Secretary on the progress made in reviewing the law and the undertaking that the Ministry would endeavour to take the Bill to Parliament without delay, the previous Committee had requested that they be availed with a progress report on the matter.

In response, the Permanent Secretary submitted that the matter had now reached Cabinet Memorandum Stage and that the Cabinet Memorandum would be circulated soon.

COMMITTEE’S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee observe that this issue has taken a very long time and they need to see its implementation. They request the Permanent Secretary to furnish them with a progress report.

STUDY ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE ZAMBIA PRINTING COMPANY

14.0 Your previous Committee had noted the submission that the Ministry had been advised to consider a Management Buy-Out for the company and that the company was being sustained with small jobs like the printing of vernacular newspapers and, therefore, had requested a progress report.

The Permanent Secretary maintained that the Ministry had continued supporting the company with the printing of vernacular newspapers while awaiting a decision on its future. Various options were being considered, including Management Buy Out and recapitalisation. The best option was one which took into account the future of the existing labour force and those already laid off.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee express fear that the longer it takes to make a decision, the higher the risk of asset stripping at the company. They, therefore, urge Government to expeditiously deal with the matter.

CONCLUSION

15.0 Your Committee wish to express their indebtedness to you, Mr Speaker, for the guidance given to them throughout the session. They further wish to express their gratitude to the Permanent Secretaries and other Chief Executives for providing the necessary information that your Committee required.

Lastly, your Committee wish to express their appreciation to the Clerk of the National Assembly and her staff for the services rendered throughout their deliberations.

May 2006
LUSAKA

A Haakaloba, MP
CHAIRMAN