

**Deputy Minister of Public Works
N Kganyago
10 February 2005**

[Back](#)

The Opening of the GCIS Media Centre in Parliament

Minister in the Presidency Dr Essop Pahad
Minister of Communication Dr Ivy Matsepe-Cassaburi
Members of Parliament
The CEO of Government Communications Mr Joel Netshitenzhe
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

We are gathered here this evening in honour of the art of communication.

We have come together to hand over the completed construction work carried out on behalf of Government Communication by the National Department of Public Works.

I must from the onset confess that for some time I used to think that communication was the concern of journalists and public relations officers only, and that it had little to do with the ordinary lives of our people.

The fact is that communication as we know it today, owes its existence to the interactions of human beings with their universe over time dating back to the first recorded history of human beings.

We are told by academic Dr Sue De Wine that the ancient Greeks used the spoken word as the dominant form of communication and were the first recorded users of rhetoric, which in their world was nothing else but the art of persuasion.

It was the Greeks who first recognized the significance of audience analysis which according to Plato meant that two principles had to be adhered to in order for conversation to have the desired meaning.

The first principle Plato suggested was that Power should reside in the people; and secondly that High offices should go to those who are selected by the people as the best suited for the job.

I have no doubt that these conditions set by Plato have already been met in this country; Power resides in the People; and the success of the elections last year means that those "selected are those who are best suited" to the job of governing.

What this means is that for effective and meaningful communication to take place, both the communicators and the objects of that communication must be empowered in order to be able to make use of the information they receive.

Rhetoric as the art of persuasion, had many disciples in the Roman Empire. The great the Roman orator Cicero writing a whole volume on the art of rhetoric while fellow philosophers described rhetoric as "a good man speaking well".

As I said earlier, Rhetoric as understood in this context is debate and engagement or exchange of information.

DeWine says further that in Medieval times we saw the gradual disappearance of publicly held debates with the power shifting to those in political power.

During the Renaissance, rhetoric was restored and science emerged as an important field of study and we were approaching a period which started to value knowledge for its own sake.

This was followed by the Enlightenment era and the Twentieth-Century which saw literary societies springing up in places like England and the rest of Europe.

It was in Europe that we saw the first separation of English and Speech, which is today closely associated

with drama more than with any other university course.

What is the conclusion we can draw from this brief history? The conclusion is that communication is ultimately about "rhetoric" as understood by the Greeks to be the art of persuasion.

To that extent, communication is about the correct analysis of all available forms of persuasion and deciding which one to use based on the impact you want to use.

We are happy that the National Department of Public Works has been able to contribute to the growth of communication by providing some of the platforms which are necessary for the nation to talk.

In this regard the National Department of Public Works has constructed nearly 20 Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCC) on behalf of Government Communications.

These were part of the more than 60 MPCC's built by GCIS as a contribution to the vision of government to bring essential Public Services closer to the communities at a lesser cost.

Through our Community Based Public Works Programme, the Department was tasked with poverty alleviation through the creation of community-owned public assets to make life bearable for the poorest of the poor in rural areas and other previously disadvantaged areas.

For us, it was always satisfying to hear various testimonies from content communities, vowing to the extent that government interventions have changed the quality of their lives.

This afternoon, we meet to hand over yet another successfully completed project to the Government Communications. One of the core functions of the National Department of Public Works is the provision of accommodation to government and its departments, including GCIS.

This accommodation is in three types and comprises functional entities such as prisons, courts and police stations. There is also residential accommodation including management of Parliamentary Villages on behalf of honourable Member of Parliament and sessional officials.

The provision of office accommodation and related facilities management completes the trilogy as attested by ongoing work here at 120 Plein Street.

The purpose is to contribute to the social delivery goals of government by ensuring that organs of government have a conducive physical environment from which to mete out impeccable service and customer care.

Building on this business relationship, the GCIS as a client, requested us to establish suitable accommodation to host media activities designed to facilitate the flow of information between the government and the public.

Thus began a R30 million (29,5m) project which would take over ten (10) months to complete commencing from February 2004.

The Large Auditorium here at the entrance to 120 Plein Street has been refurbished to reflect contemporary South Africa and provide optimum lighting, acoustics and communication services for presentations and broadcasting.

We have installed state of the art audio visual facilities and created a dedicated Journalist Station similar to the one we currently have at the Union Buildings and other new Media facilities.

The new Pavilion and Information Centre forms the new activity hub which is also part of the newly revamped offices of Government Communications.

With regard to the new studios we have constructed these to top broadcast quality and will be able to capture and distribute broadcast information from this very venue. The fully fledged studio consists of an edit suite, interview rooms and has capacity for live transmissions.

Remember that this is all part of bringing government closer to the people. We have done just that in this case, bringing the Press Corps, one of the most important links we have with the outside world and our public,

closer to the refurbished Cabinet Room in Tuynhys.

We have also taken the opportunity to showcase our own artists such as David Goldblatt, Sandile Zulu and Hylton Nel.

You will note that in keeping with the theme of forging one Nation, each piece of artwork has a unique theme with the ceramic vases commissioned for Tuynhuys are a series of newly cast shapes to celebrate South Africa first ten years of democracy.

The Department of Public Works is proud to be a vital element of the government information value chain. Despite our charter as a behind – the- scene function, the Department has over the past decade successfully transformed state’s fixed properties from mere bricks and mortar into living monuments of social, economic and political development.

The management and maintenance of Parliament and its surrounding institutions is our biggest contribution to corporate governance, democratization and socialization through information peddling.

Please join me as we officially hand-over the keys of the Parliamentary media facilities here at 120 Plein Street to the Minister in the Presidency, Dr Essop Pahad.

[top](#)