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Parliament must stay where it is

THE debate over whether Parliament should be moved from Cape Town to Gauteng should remain exactly that – a debate. South Africa has better things to do with R1 billion than spend it on a duplication on the highveld of what already exists.

When they do think about it instead of where the next meal is coming from, South Africa's millions of people on the margin – in the shanty towns and the rural slums – could not care less whether Parliament is in Cape Town or Gauteng. But they do care about such things as health services, water and sanitation, schooling and job creation. To spend R1 billion on a building to cater for a few hundred legislators would send out a very bad signal indeed.

In the age of the steam train, the Model-T Ford and the morse key telegraph, the placing of the legislature in Cape Town and the administration in Pretoria certainly was costly and inconvenient. But in the age of jet travel and the micro-chip – e-mail, cellular phones, conference phones and facsimile machines – it scarcely matters whether government officials are across the street from the legislators or 1 500 kilometres away.

To move Parliament would create at least seven huge white elephants in Cape Town as parliamentary buildings were vacated. The cost estimate of R1 billion would inevitably escalate out of hand.

The bantustan era saw a building of follies all over the country. The mistake must not be repeated.

Woodstock 're-union'

JUST say the name Woodstock and generations of music fans will reminisce about that incredible Festival in the United States 28 years ago. One of the men who 'made' Woodstock and became something of a legend was Richie Havens. Havens, who entertained 500 000 fans for more than three hours at the start of the Festival, singing his famous 'Freedom' song, will perform at the ICC in Durban tomorrow night. For all those into nostalgia and music that has stood the test of time, that's the place to be.