

# Unstinted (almost) enthusiasm for visit

## The Black Press . . . by JANE STRACHAN

THE senior senator from Massachusetts was received as a news subject by South Africa's black Press nearly as enthusiastically as Mary Jo Kopechne would have greeted a lifejacket at Chappaquiddick.

And almost all was vehemently positive: *City Press* came out with a souvenir supplement "Kennedy in SA", veteran journalist Percy Qoboza exhorted the American to "ride on, brother, ride on", Natal's *Ilanga* suggested that his strong criticism of the South Africa situation would bring about real and meaningful change, and the *Sowetan* devoted two leaders to the visitor, attacking those who shouted "go home Yank".

Qoboza, writing in his *City Press* column "Percy's Itch", has perhaps over-estimated Senator Edward Kennedy's power and popularity back home: "Our fate may hinge on what Kennedy tells US", he heads his comment, stating his belief that in 1988 the United States will elect this man President.

However, he also comments on the sharp political divisions within the black community which have been highlighted by Teddy's trip.

Azapo supporters may find that their demonstrations were the biggest error of judgment the organisation has ever made, he writes.

"Indeed, for the first time, Azapo got maximum favourable publicity on SABC radio and television — even getting guarded accolades from Current Affairs and the Citizen." Which surely says more about the double standards and hypocrisy of some sections of the media than about Azapo's politics.

Care has been taken to distance Kennedy's hosts Bishop Desmond Tutu and Rev Allan Boesak from the controversial aspects of the tour.

Abuse directed at Kennedy and his party is abused directed at them, warns Qoboza.

A *City Press* leader describes the carpet-

bagging Kennedy as "an impeccable opponent of the system" and believes that his experience of its horrors would further enhance his determination to see change in this country expedited.

"It was this, more than anything else, which prompted Bishop Desmond Tutu to invite the senator to South Africa. For this we are eternally grateful.

"The majority of black South Africans welcome the senator today. Soweto will roll out the same red carpet his brother, the later Bobby Kennedy, trampled on."

The *Sowetan's* leaders are tempered with a little more restraint, choosing rather to use the opportunity to call for more unity in the struggle and re-iterate some of the many reasons for discontent.

"We do respect Bishop Tutu's right to invite whomsoever he wishes to visit him in this country. This is what democracy is all about, and the anti-

Kennedy protests only further highlight the need for black unity that is so lacking in this country."

However, it also says that it would be naive to expect that Senator Kennedy's visit is going to make any difference to the situation.

"Indeed, even if he did win the next presidential election, he would have far more important (for America) issues to worry about than South Africa.

In another leader the newspaper takes a long look at Foreign Minister Pik Botha's handling of the affair, and notes that "we will, unfortunately, have to learn to live with his counter-productive illogical over-reaction."

It reminds Mr Botha that discrimination as a state policy has

made it the polecat of the world, and that it is therefore undiplomatic to "rave about the situation of blacks in America".

And last word from a *City Press* reader who "greatly welcomes" the senator, but at the same time hedges his bets somewhat. He describes himself as being neither a Black Consciousness supporter nor anti-Kennedy but . . . "I do feel that Azapo has a point when it calls on Kennedy to go home. Must we look across the sea — or even across the borders of our beloved land for our blessed liberators?"

"The American senate will not free us, the British Parliament will not free us. Even the Cubans or the Soviets cannot free us.

"We must do it ourselves. For once in its life Azapo is (just a little bit) right."