



When Huberta upstaged the Queen

But things have changed since the report on 'a certain family Windsor'



This is a wonderful country. A tussle over a stuffed hippopotamus merited more coverage in the newspapers this week than the arrival of the Queen of England. Nothing wrong with that: It is our hippo, after all, and she is not our queen.

The hippo Sauer is referring to is the famous Huberta who has resided, stuffed, in a museum in King William's Town ever since being shot to pieces by a farmer at the end of her epic journey down the east coast 68 years ago. Two tourism associations in KwaZulu Natal have now laid claim to the relic, and one has even threatened to break into the Amathole Museum and steal Huberta to take her back where she came from.

The dispute was the subject of long

articles in weekend and daily newspapers in *The Last Outpost* this week. By contrast, the arrival of Queen Elizabeth was a low-key affair: One daily in Durban carried only a small report about dire warnings of protest action by Jaap Marais, leader of the Herstigte Nasionale Party. The report surprised Sauer, not so much because of Marais' antagonism towards the Queen, but because Sauer didn't know the HNP still existed.

Marais is up against it, but his enemy is from within: the only major Cape Town daily to carry a picture of the Queen on its front page yesterday was the former National Party mouthpiece *Die Burger*. A far cry from the 1947, when the Queen, then still only a princess, first visited South Africa. Another NP mouthpiece, *Die Transvaler*, then edited by one H F Verwoerd, greeted the royal family's

arrival in Pretoria with a short report on an inside page: "A certain family Windsor from England caused a commotion in the streets of Pretoria today..."

Listening to what is being said about the media in Parliament these days, one would think the answer to crime in South Africa is simply to lock up all journalists. New police chief Jackie Selebi, in an otherwise impressive briefing to the Safety and Security Portfolio Committee, had a go this week, blaming the media for "glorifying" criminals and "sensationalising" crime. Roasting crime stories in newspapers was like "reading a movie script", Selebi said. He went on to say he refused to believe the portrayals - in the media - of Johannesburg as the world capital of crime.

"No one can tell me there is more crime in Johannesburg than in Moscow. No one can tell me there is more crime in Johannesburg than in Colombia, or in some of those African capitals."

Sauer had not been north of the Juskal for a while now, but if there is more crime in one of "those African capitals" than in Johannesburg, things must be very bad indeed.

Another committee, with the gargantuan title of Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women (there, that takes care of about 60 of the 600 or so words required for this column), almost makes a ritual out of blaming the country's ills on the media. This, readers will remember, is the committee which wanted to "invite" Judge John Foxcroft to explain his seven-year sentence of a

man who had raped his daughter, then lashed out at the media for reporting this when it realised it did not have the constitutional power to do so.

A report submitted to the committee by the Gender Commission this week blamed the media for contributing to gender violence by "sensationalising" and "trivialising" - take your pick - violence against women, and by "stereotyping" women. The same report then turns on the private sector as a whole, castigating it for not doing enough to address crimes against women.

"Hundreds of women work in this sector," the report states. Hundreds? Where are all those other millions of women? In the kitchen? Talk about stereotyping ...