

Linguistic Billboard

People are saying ...

* 'Phone me *on* Johannesburg 783-2407.'

* NO, NOT NOSPEAK, IT'S SHULTZSPEAK

All politicians duck thorny issues. Some do so less adroitly than others.

Consider for instance this response by American Secretary of State George Shultz to a question from an American churchman at a State Department conference in Washington this month.

QUESTION: "Do you consider the African National Congress a terrorist organisation? And if not why not?"

"And the intent of my question is that if we are concerned with bringing peaceful and constructive change to South Africa, might it not be a good idea to try to isolate the more violent elements devoted to violent change, rather than trying to draw them into the process?"

The key paragraph of Mr Shultz's reply went like this:

"There are also others with different instincts, and I thought that one of the most interesting things of the report that I got, anyway, from the leaders of the Eminent Persons Group, who I hope can say engaged - maybe they will decide they can't be, but if they can, I think they have been very construc-

tive - but they talked to Mr Mandela at length, they talked to various black leaders in and out of South Africa and in the ANC, and their judgment is - whether their judgment would be borne out in the event or not, no one can say for sure - but their judgment was - as reported to me - that what these people that they talked to were willing to do was engage in a dialogue and a negotiation if there was a reasonable chance of something genuinely substantive coming out of it, and to do their best to work against violence in that setting."

Yes well ... as they say in these parts: Is that perfectly clear now?

(By kind permission of the *Pretoria News*)

- * The current term for a steady girlfriend among University of Cape Town students is a 'handbrake'. Flirtation is termed 'doing spadework'.
- * The STYLE Award for Getting Priorities Right in the Face of Adversity.

"I reckon that what I am doing is, to follow a biblical paradigm, to constantly be speaking ... oh, I've split an infinitive (bursts into uncontrollable laughter) ... I'll have to change that. I can't stand split infinitives"

- Bishop Desmond Tutu to a television crew interviewing him at a mass funeral for unrest victims.

(STYLE Magazine)

- * In 1985, the National Council of Teachers of English Newspeak Award went to the CIA for their term for 'peace': 'permanent pre-hostilities'.

(LINGUISTIC BILLBOARD is a new feature in *English Usage*. The editors invite contributions on campus slang, jargon, and any other interesting and aberrant usage in current vogue.)