

NBC's hidden truths

Public broadcaster faces its worst financial mess. Salary bill tops N\$8 million, up from N\$5 million eight months ago

“I am as clean as a baby born yesterday”- DG

By Asser Ntinda

The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, NBC, has hit its worst financial crisis in years and, unless government pumps in millions of dollars, the NBC may just not be able to pay the salaries of its employees in about nine months.

Things have gotten so worse that some of the employees in the Corporation's Finance Department are so scared by the current spending without looking at what is in the budget.

When the current Acting Director General, Matthew //Gowaseb, took over the NBC in the middle of last year, the NBC had 366 permanent employees whose salary bill stood at N\$5 million annually.

Such overhead cost was the lowest in the history of NBC and was brought about by previous painful retrenchment and restructuring exercises, whose main aim was to cut cost. Such measures partially succeeded, until //Gowaseb got the job on an acting capacity last year.

Now, the NBC is where it was eight or nine years ago, financially suffocating through careless spending and lack of financial discipline. The nine months that //Gowaseb has so far spent at the NBC have proven disastrous, NBC employees say.

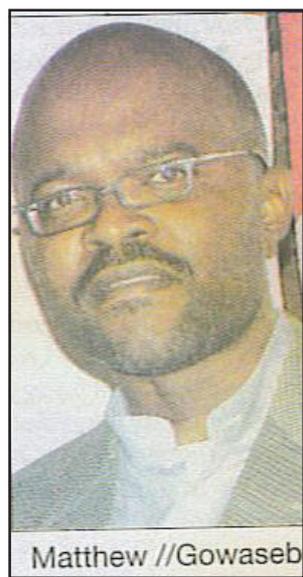
In that short period, NBC staff complement rose to nearly 500 permanent employees, up from 366 nine months ago. There are also 113 contract em-

ployees now. The NBC salary bill now stands at slightly over N\$8 million annually, up from N\$5 million nine months ago.

“People are being appointed as permanent employees solely by the Director General without following procedures,” said one frustrated employee, who was sidelined and left out for a job that went to another person.

“In December alone, nearly 50 people were appointed permanently by the Acting Director General. Most of the posts were never advertised. Such appointments were made irregularly.

“I can assure you that if either the Anti-Corruption Commission, ACC, or another audit firm comes in and investigates, the findings will be damning. We have had two different audit firms over the past four or five years and their findings were damning. This one, if it comes, will be worse.



Matthew //Gowaseb

“We have people promoted or appointed unfairly, without even looking at how such appointments and promotions will be funded. We have contracts being given to unknown shoddy companies without tender regulations and procedures being followed.

“Previous audit firms who conducted forensic reports on NBC warned NBC Management that such irregular and unprocedural practices amounted to corruption and fraud and might lead to arrests if investigated. We are back to where we were when those audit reports came out.”

//Gowaseb has dismissed the allegations as unfounded, saying that it was all part of a campaign to vilify and destroy him. “The facts you have are laughable,” he said during a short telephonic interview. “I am as clean as a baby born yesterday. Go ahead and write what you want to write. I know who is feeding you with such false facts. Everything has been done with the approval of the Board. You are trying to destroy me. Tomorrow it will be your turn. Go ahead.

Namibia Today is in possession of most of the documents substantiating and pointing to such irregular practices. Late last year, a local company was awarded a contract to do a one day presentation on how to draw up a “strategic plan.”

According sources at the NBC, the presentation was

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The crowd that one cannot ignore. SWAPO Party campaign rally in Okahandja last week. It was addressed by the non-nonsense Jerry Ekandjo, SWAPO Party Secretary for Information and Mobilization and Minister of Regional and Local Government and Housing and Rural Development. Photo by Asser Ntinda.

SWAPO set to win Okahandja

By Asser Ntinda

SWAPO Party has mobilized enough financial and human resources to ensure that it wins a by-election due to be held in Okahandja Constituency in Otjozondjupa Region next month. The vacancy came about following the death of the Councilor for Okahandja Constituency, Cde Theofellus Eiseb, last year.

The Party has appealed to all its members in that Constituency who have not yet regis-

tered to do so and give SWAPO Party a landslide win. SWAPO Party held its first rally in

Okahandja last weekend, which heralded in the start of

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Cde Jerry Ekandjo, Cde Elijah Ngurare and Cde Otto Ipinge