

# *Editorial*

At the end of this year of enormous social and political change and, during the pre-election period, great tension and violence, we hope that the appearance of this double edition of *Natalia* may be seen as a mark of the return of normality and as a small celebration of the advent of democracy in South Africa.

It was the intention of the editorial committee that *Natalia* 23 should appear as a special environmental edition at the end of 1993. To this end we requested articles on the controversy over the proposals for dune mining on the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia, and also intended to publish the findings of the Review Panel chaired by Mr Justice Ramon Leon. The year, however, drew to a close before finality was reached on the St Lucia issue and it was decided to postpone the publication of *Natalia* to enable the conclusion to be presented to our readers. When Judge Leon's panel finally released its findings, it recommended that the mining of the dunes on the eastern shores of the lake should not be permitted and that the nature conservation option should be followed. There was, however, an important caveat. The Review Panel recognised, possibly for the first time in South African history, although this precedent has been rapidly followed in other instances, that the rights of the original inhabitants of the eastern shores evicted during the 1950s so that state forestry plantations could be established, need special attention. This introduced an important new dimension into the debate which has not yet been fully resolved. The delays in 1993 mean that it is the Government of National Unity which must now decide on the findings of the Review Panel, an altogether more satisfactory situation than having the previous government decide.

This has affected *Natalia* in two ways. In the first place the publication of *Natalia* 23 was delayed for so long that it was decided to produce a double edition at the end of 1994. The editorial committee trusts that the reasons for the delay are acceptable to our readership and apologises for any inconvenience that may have been caused. In the second place, one of the main protagonists in the dune mining dispute, Richards Bay Minerals, decided, after the Review Panel had released its findings, that it was no longer appropriate for its staff to enter into public debate on this issue on behalf of the company. We respect this decision, but decided to continue with the publication of an article by Bill Bainbridge outlining the position of the Natal Parks Board on the issue. We regret that the opposing position could not be provided, in the interests of a balanced overview.

*Natalia* 23 and 24 contains a mixture of environmental and other offerings, many focusing on changes in our society and province. We publish the 1994 Natal Society Lecture by Professor Brenda Gourley, Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University of Natal, on changes in tertiary education and their effect on the University of Natal. The 1993 lecture was given by John Bradley of the Pietermaritzburg Planning Department, on changes in the

urban environment. As it was a presentation which depended to a large extent on screened visual material, it has not been possible to reproduce it in published form. The unpublished piece, edited by Pat Merrett, from Piet Hogg's reminiscences, in the well-known collection of colonial histories compiled by Christopher Bird, continues the environmental focus as it is an account of hunting trips to the St Lucia area in the mid-nineteenth century. An article by Beverley Ellis explores the development of nature conservation in Zululand from its beginnings to 1947, when the Natal Parks Board was established. We then offer Bill Bainbridge's article on the role of the Natal Parks Board in the dispute over the St Lucia dune mining. The environmental section concludes with Jon White's article on threats of inappropriate development to the other environmental treasure of the province, the Drakensberg range, and on the activities of the monitoring group Bergwatch.

Bill Guest presents a commemorative article on Natal in 1893, the year Mohandas Gandhi was evicted from the train at Pietermaritzburg station in a racial incident which sparked off his remarkable career of non-violent protest, but also the year that white Natal settlers received responsible government from Britain. Our fifth article is also appropriately timed, given the interest in the fiftieth anniversary of the Normandy landings that liberated Europe from the Nazi occupation. Bill Bizley offers an account of the neglected topic of submarine warfare off the Natal coast during the Second World War. The last blots in this naval campaign were also struck fifty years ago.

*Natalia* 23 and 24 also, regrettably, contains an unprecedented number of obituaries of prominent persons in the province. We note with sadness the passing of Magqubu Ntombela and Robert 'Treeman' Mazibuko, two great environmentalists, 'Hoffie' van der Hoven, Tony Mathews, academic and human rights lawyer, Alexander John Milne, former judge president of Natal, Dick Leigh, a well known artist, the Revd Enos Sikhakhane, founder of the Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre, Charles and Maggie Barker, pioneering medical missionaries in Zululand, and Nancy Ogilvie, a pillar of Pietermaritzburg society. The Notes and Queries section contains a range of snippets, from historic buildings to apartheid exhibitions with a brief excursion into marine biology, which we hope will appeal to readers. As this is a double edition, there is an extensive section of book reviews, which is also an indication of the vigour of scholarship in and about our region, despite the economic climate and the problems of transformation. The usual list of select publications on Natal is appended.

The foreboding with which we entered 1994 has been replaced with a sense of relief at the success of the elections, of joy at the attainment of democracy and at our return to the international community, including the Commonwealth, once so dear to many Natalians. Huge changes still confront us, particularly in the local government sphere, but other small changes are still noteworthy. The Natal Society Council has also been enlarged to reflect the library's role in providing information services to the Greater Pietermaritzburg metropolitan region and we welcome the appointment of Andrew Kaniki, Hitler Mbambo and Thulisile Radebe as new members, together with that of John Conyngham, who replaces the late Gordon Anderson.

The editor would like to record his thanks to the members of the editorial committee who took on extra work to enable him to concentrate on his thesis on Fort Napier, particularly John Deane, who has acted as co-editor and provided essential support at a crucial stage in the production of the journal.

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