

SAIIA quiz brings home importance of press freedom to the youth

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AMID the chaos of school exams and the night before the municipal elections, 250 pupils from around Cape Town arrived at Diocesan College, better known as Bishops, for the annual South African Institute of International Affairs Inter-Schools Quiz sponsored by Chevron/Caltex.

After quickly registering and finding our table, the four of us, who made up the Bishops team, took our seats and waited with anticipation, and some anxiety, for the quiz to get going.

The master of ceremonies for the evening was none other than 567 Cape Talk Radio personality Africa Melane, who welcomed the 48 participating schools, and the evening then got under way with Round One.

Each of the questions, presented

by quizmaster, Tim Hughes, SAIIA parliamentary liaison, was based on the international news reported by the Cape Times in the 10 days leading up to the quiz.

After each question, some of them comprising many parts, the audience was invited to take part in puzzling out the answers. So, the quiz was as much an event for the spectators as it was for the competitors themselves.

We were not feeling confident at the start, and this was reflected in the fact that that we did not rank among the top 10 schools after the first of four rounds.

However, we picked up momentum from there on in, and were leading by the end of the third round.

After the mandatory 20 questions had been asked and answered, guest speaker British Consul-General Christopher Trott drew attention to just how vital diplomacy and international relations are in shaping the

politics of the African continent.

Talking of his experience of the recent civil unrest in the Ivory Coast where he was posted, he highlighted the importance of the media in informing South Africans of political issues that may affect our futures directly.

The reading of each day's newspaper to prepare for the quiz had indeed brought home the value and importance of press freedom.

Upheaval in north African states, due to frustration at the oppressive nature of the respective governments, has brought to light the negative effects of controlling, or silencing, the media.

As journalists report global events and attempt to find the truth behind every matter, they pave the way to living in an open, free and just society. As young South Africans, it is the duty of our generation to cherish and protect the rights set out in our constitution,

including freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

SAIIA does an excellent job of alerting participating learners – who will, as our quizmaster pointed out, quite possibly be the leaders of the next generation – to various significant international affairs.

The quiz not only creates awareness among young people, but brings them together to learn more about global issues. Chevron/Caltex communications manager Suzanne Pullinger urged us all to take advantage of every opportunity and become the “human energy” needed in future businesses, and in doing so be the driving force behind global initiatives that will shape tomorrow's world.

At a time when most of us participants are starting to explore and consider various career options, the quiz evening was also an eye opener as to other avenues of job interest in the spheres of diplomacy, foreign

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correspondence and international relations.

The talks were followed by an intermission, during which each school collected a bundle of donated books for their library, as well as a pinboard for interesting news items. The hall was filled with friendly and excited chatter as Shakira's *Waka Waka* played in the background.

Then, as the music dimmed, Africa Melane stepped up to make the final announcements of the evening. At that point, we did not have high hopes. Although we had placed first in the previous round,

we were certain that we had not answered well enough in the final stage to ensure a victory.

Amid a tense atmosphere, Melane announced that three schools had tied for second place, and prizes would be amalgamated. Our hearts jumped to our throats as he named the tied schools: Westford, Livingstone High and Jan van Riebeeck.

At that stage, we thought that we had come fifth. When Africa then announced that the winning school was none other than Bishops, we could scarcely believe what we had heard. And, so we stepped up on to the stage amid the applause, bewildered but admittedly ecstatic, to claim the SAIIA Inter-Schools Quiz trophy for our school for the first time in 16 years.

All in all, it was a successful and highly enjoyable evening which we will remember for many years to come.

Special thanks must go to all who took part in organising and running the quiz: SAIIA, Chevron/Caltex, our host Africa Melane, quizmaster Tim Hughes, the guest speakers Christopher Trott and Suzanne Pullinger, quiz patron Paddy Atwell (director of communications of the Western Cape Education Department, Phil Court (our team organiser), and to a host of publishers and sponsors who donated book prizes and refreshments.

Last but not least, we'd like to congratulate the 200 participants who put in the time and effort to learn about so many fascinating international issues that will affect our lives in the years to come.

● *Peter Beare, Thomas Dusterwald, Dee Ferrandi, Cai Nebe and all Grade 12 learners at Diocesan College, Cape Town, are the co-authors of this article sponsored by the Cape Times, and edited by Joanne Hichens on behalf of SAIIA.*