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CASE NO: 04/1997

DATE OF HEARING: 14 March 1997

J A MARIAS

COMPLAINANT

vs

The SABC

RESPONDENT

Re: Programme "The Poet Speaks" 16/2/97

Commission: **Prof Kobus van Rooyen S.C. (Chair)**
 Rev B Mokwena
 Rev D S R du Toit

For the SABC: **Mr Malan Otto: General Manager: Information Centre**
 Ms Esthea du Toit

The Complainant was unable to attend.

SUMMARY

Poetry in 19:00 programme on radio not of such a nature that it would disturb or harm a child.

JUDGMENT

On 16 February the Respondent broadcast an interview with a poet at 19:00 on the programme

"The Poet Speaks".

The complaint reads as follows:

"I would like the Commission to listen to the transcript of the programme "The Poet Speaks", broadcast Sunday 16 February 1997 at 19:00.

Please Examine the following Complaints:

1. The programme juxtapositioned the sacred with the scatological in expressions such as "God's Diarrhoea" (SIC)
2. The programme was offensive to Christians (who hold to the sinless purity of Jesus Christ) by juxtapositioning masturbation with Jesus
3. The programme was offensive to Christians (who hold to the virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth) by juxtaposing prostitution with Mary queen of heaven
4. The sexual imagery was gratuitously lascivious

Bear in mind when considering these complaints that my nine year old daughter, who has an interest in poetry, wanted to hear the programme; certainly the contents of this broadcast were totally unsuitable for young listeners and this kind of material should not be going out at 7 o'clock of an evening".

The issue in this case is whether the timing of this programme was too early. As a starting point we have come to the conclusion that the poems recited by the poet are not legally offensive to the religious convictions or feelings of Christians. This is so since the material does not, on analysis, in any way attempt to attack or violate Christian doctrine. The poet employs these metaphors in his attempt to ponder, inter alia, the enigmas of life. On the whole it amounted to bona fide poetry.

As a result of the intricate nature of the poems and the, at times, almost impossible to follow, phrases, we have come to the conclusion that the programme would have drawn an informed audience, interested in this kind of poetry. If a child were to listen, it would not harm or disturb the child. The material is simply at too high a level to hold the interest of a child under 16 - let alone a child of 9.

The complaint is dismissed.

**JCW VAN ROOYEN S.C.
CHAIRPERSON**