

Fly on the Wall


Fly had better be a bit careful. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, and so much the more for one who gets paid for carving out of the vast hillside of ignorance fleeting flashes of familiarity. There are Things One Cannot Say these days, or at least, not without paying someone for saying them. Truth has recently taken a hammering that makes that copped of late by Fly's dear sad Lions, the Sharks and Bafana together seem the merest of temporary setbacks.

For example, Fly has it on good authority that a Big Event, involving a Round Ball, is soon to take place all over the country. Why, this he knows, as he has managed to part with the price of a small motor car for the honour of knowing he and his little son will be allowed to attend seven occasions of its happening (in respect of which Fly must remember to get earplugs for the little blighter to deal with trumpeted enthusiasm poured forth by tens of thousands lest his once in a lifetime legacy be resentment rather than gratitude). Fly is unable to be more specific, as he is not sure what precise tax every precipitately published word mentioning one of the fifteen dozen or so English terms temporarily owned by the Organiser of the big event will entail as a penalty. Apparently, when Fly passes through an official advertising zone (anything within a radius of a few kilometres of the main localities of The Event), he must utter the words published that day on the authorised notice board, and no other, on pain of brutal taxes. If one wishes to let it be known that, during the Round Ball Festival, one's hotel charges may be so-and-so instead of this-and-that, one is not actually allowed to say so without a license, and without paying The Organiser for the privilege. The Organiser owns The Rights. Parliament has spoken. Good thing Fly does not run a hotel.

He must remember at all times, when passing through one of these zones, not to mention anything to anybody about that still perfectly legal vice that entails lighting rolled up leaves and inserting the

smouldering tube into one's mouth (in no particular order). That would be a Verbal Message. If such Verbal Message can be regarded as having as its aim anything that may be regarded as a recommendation of the habit of sucking from the smouldering tube, or a preference for one kind of tube above another, then one may be sent to prison for ten years for uttering it. Parliament has spoken. Good thing Fly long gave up sucking on the little tubes ... He almost said that he remembered he sometimes enjoyed it. But that might be a Verbal Message, so he won't say that.

Fly will of course be careful not to write anything. Anything. About anything. Without an Accreditation. That too would be unlawful. Parliament has spoken. Of course, it may well be that this requirement would in practice apply only to those writings that are at the core of robust political polemic, and only when these tend to cause a true nuisance to the government's sincere efforts to govern properly. Nothing Fly would be in the slightest bit inclined to write. Nothing, in other words, to be alarmed about at all.

Parliament, it appears, is able to define the Truth in addition to forbidding it, or taxing it. Fly understands that our history of strife, for example, gave rise to a process of Truth and Reconciliation, as enshrined in an Act of Parliament. You tell the Truth, and you are Reconciled. So, you murdered people; you say you murdered people, and you are Reconciled with the families of the murdered people. They are then, in exchange for having received The Truth from you, not allowed to demand that the law react to the fact that you murdered people. That, as they say, is fair enough, Fly thinks. But now, in addition, judging from a report Fly has read, if he read it correctly, nobody is allowed to say you murdered people either. Because that Truth, the Truth you had to tell to get Reconciled, has now become a lie. Parliament has spoken. Let them rail at the fact that you have been Reconciled for murdering people – they will have to pay you damages. Better they keep quiet. And go to the Games. Wearing the approved apparel. Saying the approved things. Or just making a stupid noise on a devastating trumpet. 



Legal Crossword Number 10: Answers

Down

1 Entailed by a quartering (12) DISMEMBERING
 2 Tabula rasa (5,5) BLANKSLATE
 3 Whence English Detectives (7,5) SCOTLANDYARD
 4 Empty handed (5,4) NULLLABONA
 5 Unfavoured test to cut a restraint (4,6) BLUEPENCIL

Across

1 Describes your performance on a good day (6) ARTFUL
 2 Killed the death penalty (10) MAKWANYANE
 3 To commit arson (5) TORCH
 4 Describes those with whom you need to settle (11) INTRACTABLE