

No Stifling Debate

THE ANC leadership should know it by now: trying to stop the succession debate is like trying to get the toothpaste back into the tube.

Whether the ANC likes it or not, not only its own members but the whole country is already engaged in this debate, to a greater or lesser degree.

Everyone has an opinion about whether President Jacob Zuma should stand for a second term as party leader, and if he does stand, whether he will win against rivals who may not have declared themselves yet but who are nevertheless very much there, bidding their time, gathering support.

In the run-up to the ANC's elective conference in Mangaung next year, very little that happens within the ruling party will not be linked, in some way, to succession.

The ANC Youth League has already let the genie out of the bottle, openly campaigning for the replacement of Gwede Mantashe by Sport Minister Fikile Mbalula as ANC secretary-general in 2012, and issuing thinly veiled threats to the president himself about his political future, should he not meet the requirements of the league. And though Cosatu leader Zwelinzima Vavi said this week it was "too early" to open the succession debate, Cosatu leaders at yesterday's conference warned Zuma not to take its support for granted in next year's elections for ANC leader.

Yet ANC policy and practice is to pretend that none of this is really happening, that there is no debate going on and that the succession issue is not even open until the elective conference.

As Gauteng chairman Paul Mashatile has pointed out, these rules force ANC members into the role of onlookers while the debate rages on outside the party. He called this week for a "disciplined discussion" on the succession issue, suggesting that the debate should take place within party structures and within the ruling alliance. His suggestion that "unity should be the driving force when we discuss these issues" may be a little optimistic: the succession debate is by its nature divisive. But properly managed it need not be spiteful or damaging.

Here again, much will depend on Zuma's leadership. It is up to him to set the tone for a respectful, fruitful debate in the months before the Mangaung conference. A confident leader need not fear rivals. And even a fearful leader has nothing to gain from stifling debate about his succession: there really is no way to put the genie back into the toothpaste. Or something like that.

Man's Best Friend Too

THE RELATIONSHIP between small dogs and celebrities is long established. Until recently, no goddess of the silver screen was to be seen without a miniature pooch peeking out of her handbag, or being taken for walks. Such photographs were usually accompanied by a moving story about how the little fellow was the most important man in the diva's life, especially following her recent, tragic break-up.

Lately, however, the idea of the small dog as indispensable fashion accessory has gone into decline, which may explain the growing number of such animals ending up in animal refuges. So it is good to hear that small dogs now have another public champion.

Step forward non-female tennis star Novak Djokovic and his little friend, Pierre, whose exclusion from dog-unfriendly Wimbledon has left the Serbian sportsman "genuinely upset". This sounds like a mould-breaking moment, up there with David Beckham's decision to wear a sarong.

Why shouldn't love blossom between little dogs and tough male stars? As a newspaper that consistently goes against the grain, we applaud Djokovic for going against a tired stereotype, and for, if we may say so, thinking independently. — The Independent



Public intellectuals must speak up

South Africa needs voices of reason more than ever before, or we will be left with Malema-think



By Imraan Buccus

JULIUS Malema has made many South Africans worried. But there is no doubt that Malema has raised important issues that need to be urgently addressed. He is right to suggest that we cannot continue along the same path that we have been for the past 17 years. But Malema does not represent the voice of the poor and certainly not the voice of reason.

Instead of constructively extending the debate on land and inequality, his warlike talk about land grabs and nationalisation scares many, and already some are opting to leave the country.

So, despite the many advances in the country, we are as a nation experiencing serious problems, especially in the light of the modus operandi of people such as Malema and Jimmy Manyi.

Our problems range from rampant corruption and the enrichment of a minority, and deliberate disruptions to social cohesion to dismal

service provision in some parts of the country.

In such a context, any society looks to its intellectuals to provide direction, to reject elitism and to protect common values across society.

Like the great political philosopher Frantz Fanon once reminded us – if national consciousness does not turn into social consciousness, then corruption and the enrichment of a few will continue – all deceptively in the name of the nation.

As poor political decisions, poorly constructed national debates and corruption wreak havoc across South Africa, and while some pretend that they are advancing the cause of the poor, the numbers of dissenting public intellectuals seem to be getting fewer – all at a time when the number of public intellectuals should be increasing.

Incidentally, this is the focus of a book titled *Poverty of Ideas* by William Gumede and Leslie Dikeni. This book is certainly timely and poses

questions about the retreat of South Africa's great minds and asks whether they are hiding in fear of our society's seeming intolerance of criticism and dissent. "Where are the Robert Sobukwes, Steve Bikos and Griffiths Mxenge?" the book asks.

These days, it seems easier to be on the side of the powerful. Even civil society formations seem to have lost the plot.

Even as countries veer dangerously off course – many are afraid to heed the call of that famous, late Palestinian intellectual and activist, Edward Said, who spoke of the importance of "speaking truth to power".

Said, a grand intellectual with a global public in the mould of towering giants such as Jean-Paul Sartre and George Orwell, had a clear diagnosis of what was wrong with society, and particularly with the intellectuals.

For Said the problem was the professionalisation of the intellectual.

Once being an intellectual is a job in which one accounts to those higher up, all prospects of independent and critical thought rapidly evaporate.

Said was, of course, a professor at Columbia University in New York. But he was paid to teach English literature. His public intellectual work remained entirely unfunded. He answered to no one but his own conscience.

The same was true of Sartre and Orwell. And the same is true of those few global public intellectuals that we do have today – people such as Arundhati Roy, Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali and John Berger.

Much ink has been spilled in South Africa and around the world on the death of the intellectual. But a point that is missed by most commentators is that at the same time as most professionalised purveyors of ideas are singing the tune of their funders, there has been a remarkable resurgence of popular

critique from below.

From Oaxaca in Mexico, to Sao Paulo in Brazil to Nandigram in India to right here in Durban, ordinary people are demanding to be heard and putting all kinds of critical ideas on the table.

In some parts of the world this wealth of thinking and ideas emerging from the bottom of society as ordinary people grapple with the devastation of neo-liberalism has inspired something of a renaissance among some academically trained intellectuals. This is certainly the case in Mexico, India and Brazil. So, to some extent, despite the retreat of many intellectuals, there are glimmers of hope in South Africa.

Dissidence in the public debate is returning among some writers and public intellectuals in South Africa, especially as the intoxicating euphoria of a "rainbow nation" fades, and the public sphere faces dangerous narrowing.

If there is any hope for an intellectual renaissance in South Africa, academics and others will have to rethink how they engage the dynamics of their critical work. Perhaps it is worth remembering what Said said in 1994, as democracy reached South Africa. He argued that it was not difficult to appreciate why intellectuals were either loved or hated intensely. After all, "there has been no major revolution in modern history without intellectuals; conversely there has been no major counter-revolutionary movement without intellectuals". "Intellectuals have been the fathers and mothers of movements, and, of course, sons and daughters, even nephews and nieces." Public intellectuals must surface or else their spaces may soon be occupied by the likes of Malema.

● Imraan Buccus is a research fellow in the School of Politics at UKZN.

E-mail merletter@inl.co.za, fax 031 308 2715, or post letters to: The Editor, PO Box 47549, Greyville 4023. Letters must carry the author's signature, name and address.

forum

E-mailed letters should also include a physical address and telephone number. The editor reserves the right to edit or shorten letters. Letters with pseudonyms will only be published in exceptional circumstances.

Behind the chief justice issue

THE CHALLENGE to the extension of Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo's appointment is not a personal attack as Joseph Lukwago-Mugwera would have us believe (The Mercury, June 15). It could be a constitutional issue as Paul Hoffman argues.

It is the underlying reason for President Jacob Zuma taking the unusual decision of extending the appointment for a further five years.

What is the hidden agenda? If Western Cape Chief Justice John Hlophe had not messed up would he not have been Zuma's choice? Are Zuma and the ANC now hoping the issues swirling around the unacceptable behaviour of Hlophe will have evaporated in five years so that a known pro-ANC chief justice could be appointed?

Far-fetched? Not on a reading of the more aggressive sounds coming out of the ANC as it becomes more edgy over the restlessness and its need to use powers not available.

RON LEGG
 Hillcrest

LAW SHOULD MAKE HOME A CASTLE

ON JUNE 21 a Fordsburg, Joburg, resident was arrested by police at his home. His crime – defending himself with a firearm.

Apparently four assailants were at the crime scene. The victim used his firearm to defend himself as one of the intruders attacked him with a metal pipe inside his home. The

violent criminal was shot in the lower body.

The police then arrested the victim and confiscated his firearm.

South African law-makers must seriously consider passing a Defence of Habitation Law; this legal doctrine arose from English Common Law – it assigns one's place of residence or

place of work as a sanctuary in which citizens enjoy protection from illegal trespassing and violent attack.

It gives a person the legal right to use lethal force to protect himself and any other innocent persons, legally inside these areas. Any violent attack or an intrusion which may lead to

a violent attack in these areas justifies the use of lethal force. Surely the victim's case must be considered justifiable self-defence. This madness of treating the victim like a criminal must stop.

CHARL VAN WYK
 Gun Owners
 of South Africa

In need of answers around the issues of land, farming

WITH the heightened level of rhetoric around confiscation of land to redress historical imbalances some interesting issues and questions emerge.

The Freedom Charter specifically states "the land shall belong to those who work it". No reference is made to race and in a non-racial society, race is irrelevant.

Land reform began a long time ago, actually around Verwoerd's time when the idea of homelands and dormitory locations were mooted.

Land was ostensibly acquired from whites for usage and occupation by people of colour. The homeland process acquired huge tracts of often arable and fertile ground for human settlement activity so land reform under the post-94 government is not an innovation but a continuation and adaptation of a process.

This is a historical fact. In fact the Macabini deal initiated by the then ANC premier is totally opposite to the land reforms passed at the

ANCYL congress. South Africa is a country within a poor rainfall area. It is largely self-sufficient with no subsidies in feeding 50 million people.

Names such as ZZZ (tomatoes), TSB, Illovo, Tongaat (sugar), Syndicate Litchis, Trufruit (apples), Halls (Nelspruit), Rainbow Chickens, Schoeman Boerdery (citrus) are all world-class producers, more often than not exporting around the world.

It is easy to criticise, but does one not realise that there

is a whole supply chain involved: farm labourers and allied industries, e.g. suppliers, the markets and even the street hawkers.

Critics will say this is bottom-of-the-pile filter feeder stuff, but show me a workable alternative.

Travelling through Zambia, I was amazed at the fertile lands lying idle in contrast to Rajasthan in India, where every inch was worked on.

The government needs to train and mobilise willing farmers with the emphasis placed on disadvantaged Africans – that is the priority.

This would do wonders for our food security. Ultimately producing a generation of African farmers shows that raising the decibel level is far more important than taking the time to evaluate and fine-tune.

A workable solution needs to be implemented.

MUHAMMAD ISMAIL OMAR
 Durban

Referee was just not good enough

WE WILL never know if the Sharks' loss on Saturday was due to jet lag, body fatigue, a combination of both, or simply that the better side won.

Very poor refereeing killed any hope of a contest in the first 20 minutes by denying the Sharks any chance of establishing some sort of rhythm.

I counted 20 referee errors from the first half only, mostly penalty offences, which adversely affected the Sharks.

If there were additional errors in favour of the Sharks

they would only serve to increase the error rate and reaffirm the incompetence of the officials.

These are not the rantings of a one-eyed supporter as, in all but four or five incidents, the "errors" are not subject to individual opinion or interpretation, but are simply basic facts in rugby law, there for anyone to see, and that any self-respecting referee is paid to see.

Although a few errors were picked up with the benefit of replay, most were observed

instantly while watching the game live, so if I could see them why couldn't he?

Bryce Lawrence's record and reputation precedes him so it was, regrettably, no surprise that my instinctive dismay at his appointment to this key game and to the final was vindicated within the first 20 minutes: he is not good enough.

There will be little point in watching the final if his appointment stands.

KINGSLEY WENT
 Umhlanga

Our taxes not for Swaziland

WE HAVE our own poor to deal with, people who are starving, homeless, living on the streets and in desperate need of government assistance, but despite the protestations of even the ANCYL and Cosatu, the government is considering lending R10 billion to Swaziland. It is disgusting that our government would bow to pressure for a loan from Swaziland to feed a polygamist and his cronies, not even feed the people of Swaziland, when they have people with needs back here at home.

If the government is so flush with cash that they can lend money to Egypt and Swaziland then we know that they have money to upgrade all government hospitals and increase pensions for the aged and disabled. No government can plead poverty and the next minute act as a loan agency for all and sundry.

The government should direct its attention to its own people.

CILLA WEBSTER
 Scottburgh