



## KZN Needs To Grow

**K**WAZULU-NATAL'S R78 billion budget, presented in the provincial legislature yesterday, showed fiscal prudence and necessary social relief measures. Unfortunately it also reflected some disturbing trends.

It was perforce a pro-poor welfare budget, the biggest increases going to votes like education, health and social development (welfare). This was unsurprising in view of our massive unemployment and poverty problems which are being compounded by sluggish economic growth.

Finance MEC Ina Cronje estimated KwaZulu-Natal could achieve economic growth of between 3 percent and 3.5 percent in the year ahead – less than half the rate needed to create required jobs. She significantly said that while we might be excited about South Africa's projected inclusion in the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) grouping we could not ignore the competition that these fast-growing partners also offered.

There lies the rub. Despite the yet untested national "new growth path", there is little sign the government understands that it is squeezing out individual enterprise and the private sector by transferring ever-increasing resources to the state.

This KZN budget understandably commits the provincial government to filling its vacancies, to improving transport, to addressing issues in some of the many depressed towns and villages and to service delivery programmes which will create temporary jobs. It does not really address the type of sustainable economic growth we so desperately need.

While Gauteng, in its own budget, showed it was consolidating its position as the economic hub of the country, there was far less real encouragement for KZN business yesterday. In contrast to even the royal household, which will receive 10.8 percent more (4.7 percent in real terms), key votes like public works and economic affairs face cuts in real terms. This province's finance and development arm, Ithala, did not even appear to feature much, perhaps owing to its misfortunes after having been made a piggy-bank for the politically elite.

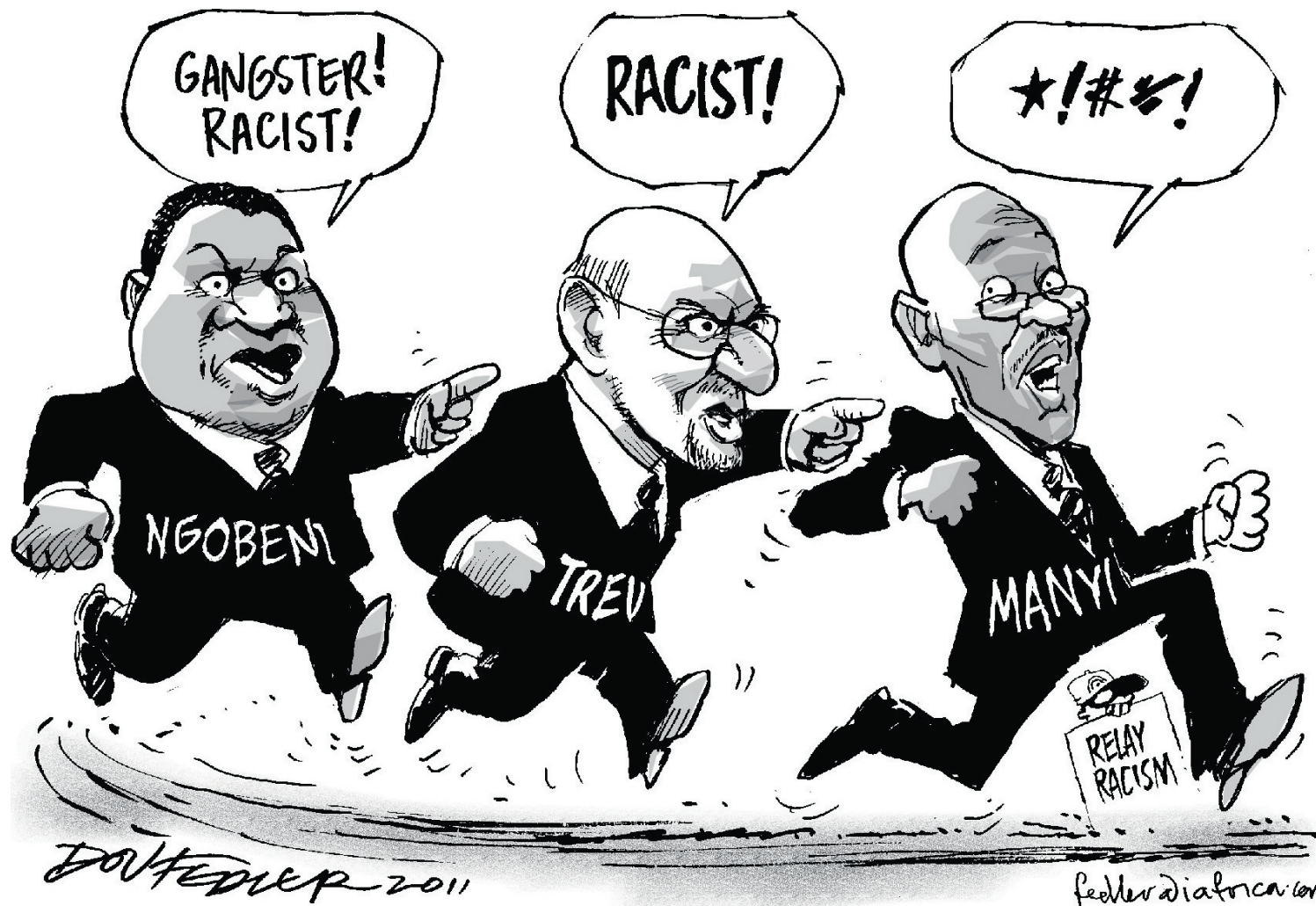
KwaZulu-Natal has been bleeding jobs. At some stage the government is going to have to realise that much more attention must be given to its productive business sectors if there is to be any hope of faster growth and of lifting millions out of the twin trap of poverty and dependency.

## People vs Nature

**T**HE DISPUTE over whether hotels should be built in the Kruger National Park reignites the debate over sustainability versus a wild and unspoilt game reserve.

Of course, any reserve that welcomes thousands of visitors – with their vehicles, their food, drink and sometimes boorish behaviour – daily is never going to be a true African wilderness. The Kruger has not been for many years, but it is a remarkable natural resource, maintained and succoured by successive governments as one of the world's premier game reserves. Kruger remains a wondrous place, despite the pressures of the park needing income to sustain itself and the inevitable encroachment of developments on its borders. But the prospect of building luxury hotels serves as the smell of a wounded zebra to the lions of the environmental lobby. Authorities make a case for the planned hotels at Malelane and Skukuza, while opponents point to the dangers of congestion.

Kruger does need to do more to support itself financially, but just as a scientific case can be made for elephant culling, this does not mean it is the right way to go. Rather probe the advisability of building the hotels further north in the less congested regions of the park, further away from the convenience of Gauteng but removed from the overcrowded south.



You & Me  
ROD SMITH

A READER writes:

"My husband is a marriage and family therapist. We have been married almost 18 years. He told me this weekend that he had been miserable for the last 10 to 12 years of our marriage. I've been a nag, and I own that. When he calls home he talks to an angry wife/mother who never asked him about himself. I own that, too."

"He has always been faithful to our marriage vows, but he hasn't forgiven me for my past mistakes. He says our marriage is 95 percent over. I asked him for a second chance to make things right, and he held my hand tenderly and said, 'It's not going to be easy. I can't go through that again.'"

"Instead of saying, 'I wouldn't want to go through that again either,' I said, 'You won't have to.' Wrong answer. He moved to a new place without us. Emotions have been wrecked. I have been insensitive and inattentive to him and his needs, and I want to make amends. How do I start?"

A: As always – get your focus off him, off the marriage, and on to retrieving your life. This means building a life worth living as if you were single. You might never get back your marriage, but you will find a future worthy of living.

□ Rod Smith is a family therapist who lives in the US. E-mail questions to [Rod@DifficultRelationships.com](mailto:Rod@DifficultRelationships.com)

# Mugabe's Tunisia Day will come

Dictators get nervous as the people rediscover their power

**P**EOPLE'S power has arrived in Africa and, as some have recently argued, it's not just Africa north of the Sahara in which the democratic spirit is stirring. The thrilling political earthquake that began in Tunisia, exploded into Egypt and then rippled out to Libya is set to leave lasting changes in its wake.

In our own neighbourhood Robert Mugabe and King Mswati must be watching the revolutions raging across the north of the continent with considerable anxiety. Neither Zanu-PF nor the Swazi monarchy will run their brutal dictatorships for ever and while the rest of us thrill to the winds of change blowing down from North Africa, that wind must be chilling to the tyrants in Harare and Mbabane.

Mugabe seems to be especially anxious. Gaddafi has been one of his biggest backers and has used his oil money to turn the AU into a new version of the old OAU, which was rightly disparaged as a dictators' club. Zimbabwean state television has, like Chinese state television, steadfastly ignored the revolutions in North Africa. And when the International Socialist Organisation, a courageous but tiny Trotskyist organisation, arranged a meeting at which people could watch some footage of the protests in Cairo, Mugabe promptly had all 46 people arrested and charged with treason. This has been followed up by axe-wielding mobs attacking MDC meetings.

Paranoia is a sign of weakness and this paranoia is even ridiculous by Mugabe's own standards. He must know that the threat by which his authority hangs could snap at any minute.

Mugabe won the elections in Zimbabwe in 2000, 2002 and 2005. Each time he was assisted with the complicity of various forces in and outside of his country. In South Africa there are factions who remain solidly pro-Mugabe, but generally political parties, trade unions, poor people's movements and civil society are united in their opposition to the Mugabe dictatorship.

When we think of Zimbabwe, in the context of the North African revolutions, we are confronted by three urgent questions.



IMRAAN BUCCUS

The first is how we offer solidarity to the Zimbabwean refugees in our country. The periodic attacks on Zimbabweans by ordinary people and the ongoing harassment of Zimbabwean refugees by our police needs to be urgently opposed. We need to recall the solidarity shown to South African exiles in other African countries and demonstrate basic human decency. Change can come to Zimbabwe soon, and in the potentially uneasy days of a difficult transition from dictatorship, South Africa will need to offer immense support to Zimbabwean refugees.

The second question that we need to consider is the nature of the flaw in some of our leaders that has allowed them to become complicit with tyranny. The struggle against apartheid was supported by governments, ordinary people and civil society around the world.

One would have thought that we would have taken a

similarly activist position towards tyranny in other countries.

But instead some in South Africa have taken the same position towards tyranny in Zimbabwe that Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher took towards apartheid – "constructive engagement" or, in Mbeki's outdated spin, "quiet diplomacy".

The third question we must ponder is the question of what went wrong in Zimbabwe. The argument that Mugabe was a good leader who went rotten holds no water. Revisionist Zimbabwean historians have pointed to ruthless abuses during the liberation struggle. And of course we cannot forget Operation Gukurahundi, the ethnic cleansing of the Ndebele in Matabeleland in the early 1980s, which cost more than 20 000 lives. This crime against humanity is enough, on its own, to ensure that Mugabe should be called to account for his crimes before

the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

It is clear that the political culture of Zanu-PF was authoritarian and rapacious long before the fiasco of recent years. Zimbabwe has been governed by a ruthless and predatory elite from the beginning. The seeds of the later crimes, the plunder of the Congo, the attacks on shack dwellers and street traders and the ruthless suppression of internal opposition, were planted early on.

What this means is that it is essential to think holistically. Just because a man and a movement opposed one form of tyranny does not mean that they are opposed to tyranny. There is a tremendous difference between using democracy to come to power and being democratic.

A democrat is not defined as a person who came to power by democracy. A democrat is defined as a person who, when in power, welcomes debate and dissent. By this definition it is clear that Zimbabwe has never been a democracy.

We should be proud that our constitution commits our government to welcome dissent and to be aware that in a

democracy we need to always protect this. Any signs of Zanuification in any part of our society are a challenge we must all take up.

So, as South Africans, when we think of Zimbabwe in the context of what is happening in North Africa, we need to also reflect on the important role that South Africa needs to play in promoting democratic transformation in Zimbabwe.

We are reminded by the Zimbabwean media entrepreneur Trevor Ncube that Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have restored the collective faith in people's power.

The clear signs that Zanu-PF has been shaken by the North African revolutions show that the regime in Harare is not all powerful and that it will go the same way as the dictatorships in North Africa. It is a question of "when" and not "if".

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E-mail [merletter@im.co.za](mailto:merletter@im.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.

## Insurance company wasn't wrong

**L**ETTER-writer Ronald Coppin raises concerns about the water-loss insurance scheme offered by the eThekweni municipality (The Mercury, March 3). He writes that the leakage on his property occurred in July 2010 based on a meter reading taken on July 3 last year but the high consumption only appeared on his municipal account dated September 8.

To produce a consolidated bill there are occasions, such as with Mr Coppin's property, that there is a delay between the reading of the meter and the printing of the account. In this case the July meter reading took place on the 30th of the month and the account was raised on September 6.

This is because there was insufficient time to get the reading into the August run. The five-week delay between the reading of the water meter and the printing of the

account has existed since our records began in 1996. The consumption on this property averaged about 5Kl a day until the middle of 2009 when it rose over a few months to 10Kl a day. In July 2010 it increased to 12Kl a day and remained at this level until the end of October.

This would suggest to me that the leak began in the middle of 2009 and increased until it was repaired, according to Mr Coppin, once he received his September water account.

Because the consumption increased gradually from the middle of 2009 our computer systems were unable to detect the rising consumption as a leak. Furthermore, given that the most recent increase in consumption ran for four months before being repaired, it means that the difference between the average consumption and the highest consumption is relatively small and therefore does not qualify

for a significant payout in terms of the water insurance policy. Concerning the increase in the charges for the disposal of sewage, the account will be adjusted downwards to cater for the increased consumption that resulted from the leak.

The consumption has returned to about 9Kl a day which is still far above the 5Kl a day of the period before mid-2009 and it could well be that there are still leaks on the property which need attention.

I do not believe that the insurance company has acted improperly given the circumstances of this particular case.

NA MACLEOD  
Head: Water and Sanitation,  
eThekweni municipality

In Ronald Coppin's letter, the date of July 30 was incorrectly published as July 3. – Editor

## Act of 'no confidence' in municipal bosses

**W**ELL, well, well. What further evidence is necessary to prove that even the top brass of the ANC has no confidence in senior staff to handle the

affairs of local authorities. An ANC minister wants it legislated that Sars handles all billing and debt collection for municipalities because of the

inability of the richest metro (Joburg) to handle such issues.

VALENTIN VOLKER  
Pietermaritzburg

IT IS evident the ANC does not understand the contribution of the Indians to SA ("Is it payback time for exposed Sutcliffe?", The Mercury, February 11). What is shocking is that Indians in the ANC accept it. Indians

have always advanced solely on merit – look at the matric pass rates and who has the most distinctions. Why then must we be disenfranchised when we are clearly competent? I was shipped out of local

government because I'm Indian. Qualified as a professional town clerk I was penalised not for incompetence, but for my skin colour. I was entrenched and replaced by a person with matric and the right skin

pigmentation. My daughter had four distinctions in matric and performed exceptionally at varsity. She's now unemployed: through her skin pigmentation. It is time this form of blatant racism is stopped.

Affirmative action means not the most competent person but the one with the right skin pigmentation gets the job.  
SUSHEELDUTH BHOLA  
Amanzimtoti

## Why must Indians forfeit jobs because of their skin colour?