

THE MERCURY
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ANC's Achilles Heel

THE MERCURY and its sister newspapers in the Independent Group have set the cat among the pigeons with our ongoing lifestyle audits of leading politicians – most notably that of ANC Youth League president Julius Malema.

Following our report on his lifestyle, claims have been made that he is involved with companies that have secured contracts worth many millions, including from municipalities in his home province, Limpopo. Amid strong protestations of innocence, and denials that he is still connected to firms which have benefited from contracts paid for from the public purse, Malema has pointed out he is not an elected official, and is entitled to do business with whomever he wishes.

On that score he is quite correct. Malema is not a minister or MP or even a local councillor, so no register of assets applies to him. He is free to trade in baby dummies, luxury cars, caseloads of single malt whisky – in fact anything that takes his fancy. But where the issue becomes murky is when that trade involves getting paid by national, provincial or local government departments: this is public money, and the taxpayer and ratepayer is entitled to know what is done with it. And if a company which includes politically well-connected individuals within its ranks secures lucrative government contracts, then questions are bound to be asked.

This is the tip of the iceberg which the furor over Malema has again exposed – the question of allegations of corruption in awarding of tenders. Much lip-service has been paid to this issue by the ANC, but it is one which platitudes will not wish away. Just how much does the awarding of contracts by ANC officials to comrades, spouses and relatives in the private sector have to do with kickbacks rather than ability to economically and efficiently carry out the work contracted for?

Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi has called for all career politicians – and their spouses – to be banned from doing business with the government. This should be considered at the highest levels of the ANC nationally and in this province. Until the snouts are removed from the troughs, the stench of corruption will cling to the ruling party.

Tortured Arguments

A RESPECTED US Justice Department official has concluded that two George W Bush administration lawyers, who wrote memos authorising the abuse of suspected terrorists, did not commit misconduct that would justify disbaring or disciplining them. But Associate Deputy Attorney-General David Margolis's report is far from a vindication for John Yoo's and Jay Bybee's shamefully narrow interpretations of laws against torture and views about presidential power.

Documents drafted by Yoo defined the "severe" pain prohibited by an anti-torture law as that associated with "death, organ failure or serious impairment of body functions". The memo suggested interrogators would be violating the law only if inflicting pain was their "precise objective".

Justice Department investigators concluded that Yoo, a University of California professor, "failed to provide a thorough, objective and candid interpretation of the law" and that Bybee, a federal judge, "acted in reckless disregard of his professional obligations".

Margolis's report, like the American legal system, resolves doubts in favour of the accused. We worry that his verdict will be misrepresented as an exoneration of two lawyers who allowed themselves to serve as accessories to a policy that has caused incalculable damage to the moral authority of the US. They may not be disbarred, but they are disgraced. – Los Angeles Times



You & Me
ROD SMITH

Q: I AM one of the "jealous men" you often refer to and I think you are being very unfair. I've been with my girlfriend for almost a year, and it's the only thing that causes problems for us in an otherwise perfect relationship.

Jealousy isn't as simple as you make out. I love my girlfriend with all my heart, but this "monster" inside me is impossible to control. I've tried to get to the root of the problem many times, and I think it's probably to do with past relationship experiences and very high levels of testosterone.

So you can make jealous guys out to be men who have no consideration for our partners but that isn't true. I love my girlfriend so much and would do anything to change.

It's something uncontrollable that I'm desperate to cure. The prospect of having to live with these constant feelings, pushing away those that I love, is truly terrifying. (Edited)

A: I know jealousy can be uncomfortable for both the perpetrator and the victim. Thankfully, many men and women triumph over jealousy through guidance, grit, and the painful process of letting go.

Healing is close to you when you see it as your issue, but healing will evade you whenever you place blame upon anyone for your issue.

□ Rod Smith is a family therapist who lives in the US. E-mail questions to Rod@DifficultRelationships.com

Workers the voice of sanity against plunder

Principled trade unions pose a credible challenge to 'tenderpreneurs' who masquerade as revolutionaries

SOUTH Africa is indeed a weird country. The contradictions and levels of hypocrisy are stark. I would hasten to add that I don't think politics is as interesting and mind-boggling anywhere else in the world, like it is in South Africa. But, then again, that old Chinese curse does make it clear enough that interesting times aren't always good times.

In the late 90s, leading communists were driving the move towards privatisation and the "restructuring of state assets". In fact, at one point in the 90s, it had become almost impossible to champion communism within the ranks of the SACP.

Indeed a party member actually advocating communism was likely to be expelled from the party on the grounds of ill-discipline. And in recent times, the communists are resisting the nationalising of mines while some nationalist "tenderpreneurs" demand nationalisation with increasing hysteria.

This must be more than a little confusing for many who would have thought that communists would naturally gravitate to and align themselves with calls for nationalisation while nationalists would oppose nationalisation

by all means necessary.

I wonder how on earth one teaches Politics 101 in South African universities when the conservatives propose nationalisation and the radicals reject it.

The standard categories and framework just do not apply here. Of course, there is an underlying logic though, but not one that will show up in any standard textbook.

Plunder

On one hand the conservative nationalists want state control over the country's assets to plunder them for their own interests. They are interested in nothing other than short-term appropriation. The communists on the other hand recognise that productive ownership of the mines is better for the workers than ownership bent only on plunder.

They understand that long-term productivity will enable their members to organise, go on strike when necessary, and slowly increase their share of the profits.

The hypocrisies and con-



IMRAAN BUCCUS

traditions of the post-democratic order have become very serious. Many seem to have forgotten that public office is about being of service to the public.

The struggle against apartheid was a principled one, one where many who are in government today made many sacrifices yesterday.

Ironically, now while they articulate a commitment to the downtrodden in the public discourse, they also plunder the public purse in an attempt to enrich themselves quickly.

The language of concern for the poor is often nothing but camouflage behind which plunder is taken to extreme levels.

The struggle against apartheid was not to replace one big man with another of a different colour. The struggle against apartheid was to replace one kind of society with another. This was why

the whole world recognised its enormous moral power.

That moral power is fast being eroded by people such as Julius Malema, about whom much has already been written in recent days. Malema takes the idea of contradictions to the extreme.

Not long ago, Malema is credited with having said: "You must never role model a rich person who can't explain how they got rich."

"In the ANC we must not have corrupt people as role models. Corrupt means a simple thing – you can't explain the big amount in your bank account."

The same Malema is reported to have benefited from more than R130 million worth of tenders, owns luxury homes and wears a watch worth R250 000. In addition, he owns a fleet of cars that include a Range Rover, an Aston Martin and a C63 Mercedes

AMG. Yet each day he shouts slogans against capitalism and proclaims revolution to the masses.

When the celebrated scholar Franz Fanon wrote his famous text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, in the 60s, it is almost as though he was thinking of post-apartheid South Africa – politically democratised and economically liberalised, with a growing class of selfish bourgeoisie.

Revisit

He argued then that the progressive project could be threatened by a culture of personal accumulation and private advancement by those who had helped bring liberation. Perhaps Fanon is worth a revisit, particularly his warnings about once-vibrant political organisations serving only "as a means of private advancement". If there is a textbook with which we can teach politics in our country it is probably *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Our politicians and leading members of the ruling party need to understand that they

are the servants of the people and answerable to them.

State institutions and resources do not belong to them, their spouses or friends. Occupying a public office is not their legal or birthright but a privilege based on mutual trust between them and the electorate.

Cadres in government should ask themselves whether they really and truly represent, serve and deliver according to the will of the masses as envisaged by the Freedom Charter or if they have just become skilled in deploying documents such as the Freedom Charter to dress up their plunder as revolutionary activity.

The only real opposition to the "tenderpreneurs" in the ANC alliance comes from some of the trade unions.

It is here, and in the poor people's movements, that one can still find politics of principle. The voices of sanity within our society come from the organised workers and the poor.

● Imraan Buccus is a research fellow at UKZN and the Democracy Development Programme. He is also attached to Southern Insight, a group of research consultants.

E-mail merletter@ml.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.

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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.

Will ANC ban all elephants?

I FIND it quite chilling how quickly an outbreak of "political elephantitis" can spread, even if it only affects one communal branch of our society. However, this occurrence has had some interesting results.

In a most unexpected way it has given the IFP free publicity. Furthermore, it has provided concrete proof that our ruling party considers its IFP opponents threatening enough to ban a brilliant work of art that would have been a splendid asset to Durban.

I fear there may just be a draft bill in the offing which will seek to ban, in the media and on television, all reference to that well-loved animal.

Worse than this, will the bill decree that the game parks of South Africa be required to secretly relocate all elephants to avoid the present government having their castle toppled in any way?

Don't laugh, but all this is only as childish as the original objects who saw this splendid project as possible disaster to their comfortable hidey-holes.

BRIAN CLARKE
Durban

GUARD AGAINST VUVUZELA HARM

AN ARTICLE by Swanepoel, Hall and Koekemoer in the February 2010, edition of the South African Medical Journal draws attention to the danger of exposure to the sound intensity produced by vuvuzelas.

In terms of the National Occupational Safety and Health Act, the maximum permissible level of sound in a factory is 85 decibels, in

an eight-hour period. If the noise level exceeds this limit, the employer is obliged to provide the worker with hearing protection.

Sound measurements undertaken by doctors Swanepoel, Hall and Koekemoer indicate that a person sitting within 1m of a vuvuzela would experience a sound output of

120dB which would decrease to 113dB if the distance was increased to 2m.

Furthermore, according to the literature, anyone within a 2m radius of a vuvuzela, including the person blowing it, should not be exposed to the sound continuously for more than a minute. Such circumstances can lead to a noise-induced hearing loss.

Durban

The authors of the article did not measure the cumulative sound effect of massed vuvuzelas in a soccer stadium.

People attending soccer matches would be well advised to use ear plugs if they wish to preserve their hearing.

JJA KEY (DR)

Blue-light debacle spotlights how helpless we citizens feel

IT IS quite astounding how a senior member of the ANC deliberately twists facts.

The proposed ban on the blue-light brigade in the Western Cape is not, as Minister of Police Nathi Mthethwa is well aware, aimed at the police doing their duty.

It is to stop the puffed-up, full of their own importance, ministers and senior ANC members endangering the lives of ordinary citizens.

I was recently forced off the road (I was in the inside lane)

and just missed hitting a wall. As the goons sped by they shouted abuse and gave me rude signs, roaring with laughter at this terrified gogo.

I could not get the number plate as they were going too fast.

We, the general public, are sick to death at being treated like this and having our lives put at risk. What about your citizens?

MARGARET AMBLER-MOORE
Durban

UK v SA price differential no guarantee against rip-offs

I WAS amused by Warren Ozard's rather disingenuous letter comparing the price of a meal or a beer at Heathrow with the same items in Durban ("Tourists won't be ripped off", *The Mercury* February 17).

Those items at OR Tambo would also cost more than in Durban; likewise, the same things in, say, Birmingham, would cost less than at Heathrow.

He should compare like with like. Of course visitors from Europe will find many prices cheaper here than at home, but

their salaries are roughly double those here, so European prices are not the problem for them that they would be to someone in SA.

However, some people are going to be ripped off – someone who runs a B&B in Durban stated that during the World Cup her prices would be R2 000 a night instead of R1 000. It is people like that who will give SA a bad name for tourism.

LINDA BROOKS
Durban

Escalating cost of billing software

AS AN electronics engineer and senior project manager, it comes as no surprise to me to read that the cost of the software development of the new municipal billing system has surged from an estimated R90 million to R150m, to R485m, and that the development time frames have more than tripled.

If any of the politicians involved in making the decisions had consulted any electronics/software engineering project manager who is actively involved in

software development projects, they would have been advised to take whatever cost and time scale estimates they received from the software developer and to multiply these by a factor of at least pi (where pi is 22 divided by 7 or, alternatively, 3.14159265) to get a more realistic estimate of cost and time scales.

This has been my personal experience in managing such projects over the last 27 years and is, in reality, the most optimistic estimate.

Durban

Next time the city wants to embark on any software development projects, please consult an appropriate engineer first, and I hereby volunteer my services free of charge to advise you on the risks involved before you consider undertaking the project and wasting my hard-earned money that I contribute in rates and taxes.

ROGER COUZENS

ANC should agree to calls for lifestyle audits

FINANCE Minister Pravin Gordhan says "phansi nenkohlakalo" (down with corruption), but on SAfm he and his deputy, Nhlanihla Nene, dodged questions on corruption implicating Jacob Zuma and his cronies.

The test of this government is on fighting corruption committed by those close to Zuma and the ANC. Why is the ANC refusing to endorse a call by Cosatu to audit the lifestyles of politicians?

Millions of rands in state coffers are wasted because of

corruption. In many ways the ruling party has compromised itself as a true ally of the people against corruption.

If the ANC agrees to an audit of lifestyles of public representatives and state officials will it audit Zuma, S'bu Ndebele, S'bu Mpsane, Jay Singh, David Mabuza, Julius Malema, Mabheleni Ntuli, Skhumbuzo Qwabe, John Mchunu, Jurgen Kohl and Vivian Reddy?

PAULINE ZULU
Nongoma

Earth Hour is actually in March

THANKS for notifying your readers about Earth Hour; the upcoming WWF event to urge action on climate change.

Your Cape Town correspondent stated that Earth Hour is this weekend; however, it actually takes place globally on Saturday, March 27, at 8.30pm.

Visit www.wwf.org.za to call for a climate deal that keeps global warming below 2°C and pledge to reduce your own carbon footprint. You can urge your employer to do the same.

CAROLYN CRAMER
WWF South Africa