

Defuse the bomb

UNIVERSITIES are the nursery of tomorrow's leaders – and in South Africa's case, we could be excused for feeling incredibly despondent. We have been witness to a tsunami of protests; running the gamut from the contestation of curricula to access to education. These two campaigns, better known as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, have been widely supported by the broader non-university community, because of the fundamental agreement that education is the greatest hope we have of breaking the DNA of the past. There is also an acceptance that we need curricula that move with the times and do not reflect a dogma, learnt and lived, that is often unrepresentative and out of touch with the changing demographics of our tertiary institutions. Another reason has been that, rhetoric notwithstanding, this was largely a peaceful and orderly protest on principle. Last week, the shape and the tenor of the protest began to change in scenes reminiscent of Nazi Germany as mobs ripped

The NFP needs to face reality

THE recent press conference addressed by Maliyakhe Shelembe, national chairperson of the National Freedom Party, cannot go unchallenged. The leadership of the National Freedom Party is in great political denial that it is running its last mile in politics. The longest political leave of its leader Zanele kaMagwaza-Msibi and the internal leadership squabbles tell a lot of about this writing on the wall. As the local government elections are drawing to a close this fact becomes clearer than before that the NFP will be a toothless bulldog soon! We fail to understand why the NFP leadership keeps on saying "she will be with us soon" but every now and then KaMagwaza-Msibi does not pitch up. Are they still believing that she is still a crowd-puller or trump card? This tells us that there is a great possibility of her not coming back again into active politics. The NFP leader might not come back for ever and its leadership "campaign" to keep her fresh in the minds of her supporters is now running out of strategies. So they are aware that the more they say she is recovering and coming back soon, a fire of optimism keeps germinating in the hearts of people. We respect and admire KaMagwaza-Msibi and continuously pray for her recovery, but we should not be blinded by the reality. Her health is better than any other political position or fame – that is why we pray for her full recovery more than coming back into active politics. It is therefore high time that the NFP stops living in political denial. It is impossible to see their leader coming back and chances are slim beyond description. Wake up from your slumber, NFP leadership. You have so much on your plate rather than cooking stale meat with different recipes instead of throwing it away. MFANA CHARLES KHUMALO Soweto

Second take From The Melbourne Age

Free media access key

A FREE and independent media, committed to promoting a multitude of diverse voices and views, is the bulwark of a democracy. A vibrant media environment disseminates information, facilitates the exchange of ideas and opinions, fosters debate and critical analysis, and in so doing helps to hold governments and others with power to account. Such media provide voters with the range of information they need to make crucial decisions. Yet the existing laws, which limit ownership of media platforms in Australia and curb the reach of any single media group, do not aid these principles. On the contrary, they serve to hamper the free exchange of views, because the intention is to limit media organisations' access to consumers, and thus they limit consumers' access to content. That is anathema to the ideals of free speech and the right of all voters to be properly informed. But advances in digital technology have overwhelmed the rationale for laws that limit media ownership by virtue of the type of platform or by audience reach. The proliferation of new media platforms, of new ways of accessing content, coupled with the rise in citizen-journalism, independent online media outlets, and the vast range of mainstream social media outlets have punctured the potency of the major media groups. The anachronistic laws must go. The Age welcomes Cabinet's in-principle decision to scrap the two-out-of-three ownership rule and the 75% reach rule. These are sensible proposals, which we hope the broader Coalition and Labour will support. Laws designed to shackle competition, or that limit consumers from accessing news, views and opinions, have no place in our modern, sophisticated democracy.

Thought for the day

It is easier to lead men to combat, stirring up their passion, than to restrain them and direct them toward the patient labours of peace. – Andre Gide (1869-1957) French author

BRIEF insights on (real) bravery

Rod Smith



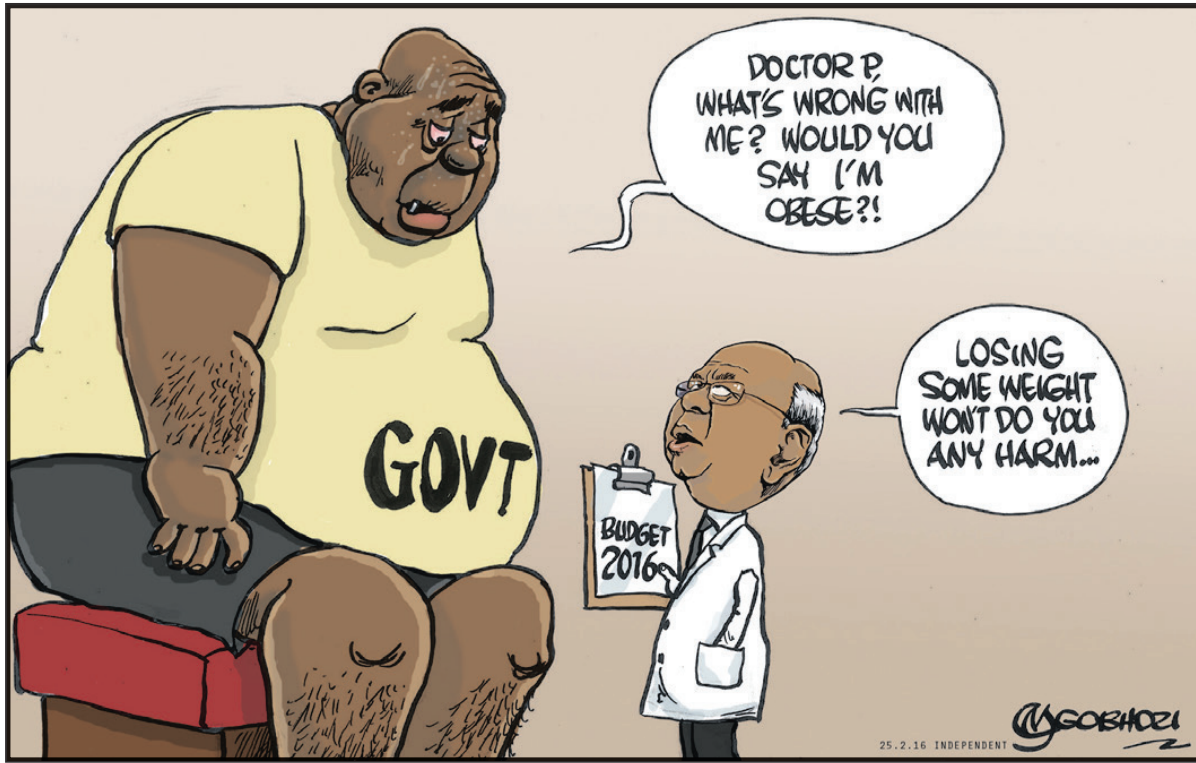
willing to appear to fail or appear to be less than successful so a student may learn or experience something new – success breeds success.

- The parent who knows how much to tell a son or daughter and how much to withhold from a son or a daughter so he or she may be necessarily and appropriately informed and yet at the same time not unnecessarily burdened – love includes and love edits. ● The person who knows and understands that love is about listening and supporting and learning and making room for the needs and concerns of others – love makes room for others. ● Smith is a family therapist in the US. He can be e-mailed at FamilyTherapist@iCloud.com.

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duties she is paid for: What is unacceptable is that the qualification she is studying for is of no benefit to her position. As a ratepayer in Durban I expect the employees of the council to devote their full efforts to their jobs, which clearly is not the case in this instance! TONY BALL Durban

so obvious to evolutionists and it fits the neo-Darwinian "hypothesis"? What is certain is there is no scientific proof for this hypothesis however obvious it might seem. CB ROGERS Durban

Questions about Muslim marriage

MANDLA Mandela's marriage to an attractive Muslim woman raises many questions that people who wish to know how this fits in with the culture of an nkosi marrying outside his community.

The question to ask is: Just how much does Mandela know about the religion to which he has converted? One suspects that he converted not because he was attracted by its teachings but to satisfy an Islamic regulation. He should ask why there is such a regulation at all. Others might suggest that he stays with his faith and allows his new wife to continue in her tradition. Later developments would be taken care of by them privately; but in this case after consultation with elders in the Mvezo community.

To regard him as a traitor to his culture is not without foundation. Why did his wife not give up Islam to convert to the African culture of her husband? Many thousands of non-Muslim women embrace the Islam of their husbands in many parts of the world because of this regulation.

Many questions can be asked about Islam having respect for other cultures. If the new Mrs Mandela is to be queen of her community would she not seriously consider following her new-found culture out of respect for her people? In a letter (The Mercury, February 18) Saber Ahmed Jazbay raised many questions about the way in which Islam expresses itself in our modern world.

I have studied Islam over several years. One day I may meet a scholar who would answer my questions about this faith that leaves me and very many others wondering just how to come to terms with it in a truly religious context. THILLAY NAIDOO Durban North

Compton quite right on Klusener

PATRICK Compton's story on the axing of Lance Klusener and the state of cricket in KZN is to be commended. For more than seven years fans have seen a succession of coaches and board members, leaving the state of cricket in the province in tatters. Past players to recent, such as Jackie McGlew, Trevor Goddard, Grayson Heath, Roy McLean, Neil Adcock, Barry Richards and Mike Procter, must despair at the bumbling power plays at board level and interference with coaching staff.

Why did Hashim Amla, one of the world's greats, take himself off to the Cape Cobras? One of the premier league teams, African Warriors, continue to be humiliated, hardly ever scoring over 100. What coaching do they get to lift their performances? It would not be surprising if Kyle Abbott, Keshav Maharaj, Andile Phehlukwayo, David Miller and Khaya Zone all rush off after Klusener to better run cricket opportunities.

Now coach Shukri Conrad could be appointed. His SuperSport cricket commentaries are standard and with a batting average of 21, who would seriously respect him? KZN Cricket sponsors should suspend their sponsorship, and cricket-lovers stay away, until concrete evidence of a way forward!

Patrick Compton is an outstanding cricket writer and is our eyes and ears on the goings on at Kingsmead. He should be encouraged to every turn to report with transparency, not be fobbed off and told it's none of his business. VINCENT WARRINER Umgeni Park

One wrong on top of another

Alistair Tamlit



COMMENT

ON JULY 13, 2015, 13 Plane Stupid activists – including myself – occupied the northern runway at Heathrow Airport. At around 3.45am a hole was cut in the perimeter fence. We walked over to the runway, erected a tripod and some Harris fencing, and locked on to each other using arm tubes, D-locks and chains. Our occupation lasted more than 6 hours and 25 flights were cancelled as a result, saving hundreds of tons of CO2 from being emitted that day. We were eventually removed, arrested and charged with aggravated trespass and unauthorised entry into a restricted zone.

During our trial in January, we argued that our actions were reasonable, proportionate and necessary in order to prevent death and serious injury via air pollution and climate change. Globally, 300 000 people are already dying each year because of the effects of climate change. They are mainly people of colour in the global south, in poor communities and indigenous groups. They are among the most marginalised and the least responsible for causing catastrophic climate change. Judge Deborah Wright said it was "indisputable" that aviation caused climate change, yet she still found us guilty and told us to "expect jail". Today we are to be sentenced. If we go to jail, we will be the first climate activists to be imprisoned in the UK.

Runways Much of the attention surrounding our action has focused on the injustice and draconian threat of being locked up for our actions. Clearly none of us would choose imprisonment. However, it's important that this is not singled out as the main injustice in our campaign. The real injustice is climate change. The real injustice is that the majority of the world's population – those in the global south, those who suffered at the hands of colonialism – are the ones who are affected by the exuberant lifestyles of the few.

The science is clear: aircraft emissions are the fastest-growing source of CO2 in the UK. With current growth rates in the aviation sector, it is highly unlikely that we will meet our legally binding commitments in the 2008 Climate Change Act. This is without expanding airports or building new ones. If we are to take climate change seriously, there can be no new UK runway at all. Following decades of failed negotiations on climate deals, broken promises by this government over being the "greenest ever", a complete U-turn on David Cameron's "no ifs, no buts" pledge for no third runway at Heathrow, it is clear that the democratic process is not working. There is growing outrage over the broken promises, and also over the fact that people like me will be repressed for taking action. The momentum that is building behind our campaign means there will only be more effective and disruptive actions against aviation and fossil fuels.

Currently, 15% of the population take 70% of flights in this country. These rich, frequent flyers are the ones driving aviation expansion. To build another runway would be to act on behalf of a rich minority, who benefit from this decision, while the rest of us are left to mop up the mess in terms of pollution and the advance of dangerous climate change. The effect aircraft emissions have on global warming lays bare the hideous inequalities that are so prevalent in our world. The fight against aviation is not limited to Heathrow or Gatwick. We stand shoulder to shoulder with other struggles around the world, from the Northern Forests Defence in fighting a third airport in Istanbul, to La Zad in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, calling for a day of action on Saturday, to which Plane Stupid is planning to respond in solidarity. When we say no new runways, we mean no new runways, anywhere. – The Independent

● Tamlit is a member of Plane Stupid, a campaign group that takes direct action to highlight the effects of the aviation industry on global climate change.

KZN again the epicentre of violence

As in the '80s, political assassinations, police torture and driving of activists from their homes are all worse here

Imraan Buccus



COMMENT

HORRIFIC murders, pre-local-election assassinations and the general culture of violence seal our reputation as a dangerously violent society. And while we all share the hope that murderers will spend the rest of their lives in prison, the reality is that the police are often the perpetrators of horrific violence. A recent survey showed that 70% of young people don't trust the police, and in the light of recent scandals regarding police murder and brutality, there are good reasons for that.

The crisis that we face is a crisis of society and it is a crisis of the police. We need to move beyond simplistic calls for tougher policing. We need radical police reform, including demilitarisation, and we need radical social reform too. But the problem we face is that, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, political violence is rapidly becoming entrenched. The province was the epicentre of the civil war in the 1980s and, once again, it is the epicentre of political violence now.

Political assassinations, police torture, and the practice of driving grass-roots activists from their homes are all worse here than anywhere else. Recent reports claim that most political murders occur in KZN, especially in recent years. This is just incredible. Much of the political violence in the province is linked to power struggles within the ruling party, and some is linked to rivalry between the ANC, IFP and NFP. In recent times many grass-roots activists have been killed too. With this degree of political violence it's clear that we cannot rely on politicians and political parties to reform the police and society at large. And while the media takes the murder of someone like Reeva Steenkamp very seriously, the lives of people who are poor and black are usually not taken seriously at all. This means that the media is also often part of the problem. Some people think that the answers are in the family. But the family is where most gender-based violence happens. The family is, therefore, also often part of the problem. There are no easy options for dealing with the crisis of violence in our society. It is not a problem that we can expect the police, the politicians, "gangster leftism", the family or the media to solve for us. If we are going to take a decisive step away from the culture of violence we, as ordinary citizens, will have to take responsibility for this on our own.

We will have to refuse the culture of violence and the machismo that often goes with it. We'll have to oppose it in every community and wherever it rears its head. We'll have to think about how we raise our sons and what we accept from our politicians, police and media. We will have to isolate people who turn to violence and build cultures of peace and spaces where these cultures can flourish. This is not a task that we can leave to anyone else. It has to be a responsibility that we all take on and that we all share. If we keep going down the road that we are currently on we'll end up like Colombia. The rich will be barricaded into private spaces and protected by private security guards while the poor will be at the mercy of all kinds of thugs – some in the police, some in political parties and radical groups and some in criminal organisations. This is a nightmarish future. It is a future that we must step back from and that we must

“Our freedom did not flow from the barrel of a gun and neither will a better future”

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step back from now. We have all kinds of urgent challenges facing us. We need to deal with mass unemployment, with rampant corruption, endemic gender-based violence including rape, and the complete lack of any real vision in party politics. But we will not be able to deal with any of these problems if we don't take the urgent challenge of rooting out the culture of violence very, very seriously. We need to stop celebrating the narrative that falsely claims that we owe our liberation only to our armed struggle – that it was central to our liberation. It wasn't. It was the community struggles organised into the UDF, and trade union struggles organised into Cosatu, that won us our freedom. This is shown brilliantly in Stephen Ellis's book External Mission. Our freedom did not flow from the barrel of a gun and neither will a better future.

● Buccus is a senior research associate at ASRI, a research fellow in the School of Social Sciences at UKZN and academic director of a university study abroad programme on political transformation.