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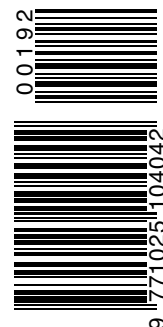
**South Deep:
More scam
than gold**

**Racist rules
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Letters

Private shots

I REFER TO THE LETTER ON HUNTING by Pat Werdmuller von Elgg in *nose191*.

The Cecil incident happened in Zimbabwe and while it could perhaps happen here it is not a stick with which to beat “corrupt governance in South Africa”. The fact that South African law allows game to be owned privately is a huge success for conservation.

Under private ownership game numbers have increased, whereas in the rest of Africa numbers have uniformly declined. Privately-owned rhinos in South Africa represent 40% of the world total, more than in the rest of Africa. Part of the reason for the growth in wild animal numbers is that hunters are prepared to pay much more than the going tourist value for game, allowing for a profit which owners generally plough back into the business of raising more game.

I have no connection with shooting, but if a hunter, even a dentist from Minnesota, wants to come and shoot trophies, I say “Welcome, you are bringing money into the system, to the benefit of rural communities and conservation”. Provided the Professional

Hunter Association standards are maintained, hunting benefits wildlife.

Ian Hurst
Groot Drakenstein

You seem to suggest that nature is only deserving of preservation if there is profit in it for man. I reckon there are a fair number of people prepared to pay a lot for a licence to shoot a dentist in Minnesota. – Ed.

Pravin's eye

RE YOUR UPDATE ON SARS SPIES (*nose191*): so Pravin is in it up to his ears!

Mike Turner
University of Cape Town

Route to Mars

THE ANC GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVELY nationalised the country's minerals and not a peep was heard from the mining houses who were keen to ingratiate themselves and keep that which they had by “reapplying” for mining licences they already had. Look at the current fiasco!

So it went when the current labour laws were being promulgated. Not a

peep from organised labour or the large corporations. Now the land grab in a similar style (“Land grab by stealth” *nose191*) and hardly a murmur from anyone. No wonder the ANC is emboldened to do just as they like. What is needed? Burning tyres, murdering government officials and politicians, burning government buildings? Will this government then desist from acting arbitrarily to push South Africa down the communist road to ruin?

CL Rust
Kempton Park

The main attraction of the “Marxist” route (and one wonders how many local proponents have read more than a slogan or two coined by the man) is the power it gives to petty politicians and bureaucrats with fake qualifications. And, unlike in free enterprise, someone / everyone else pays for your incompetence. – Ed.

Listen up ye execs

YOUR ARTICLE “COROBRIK AT CCMA” (*nose191*) makes interesting reading. As an HR consultant I am shocked that a company the size of Corobrik conducted what appears to have been a kangaroo court, with no respect for our hard-won progressive labour laws.

May others take note: having an internal chairperson chair eight consecutive hearings certainly creates a perception of bias. Using intimidation tactics, not following laid-down procedures and threatening staff at disciplinary hearings will cost companies dearly, and will prove a huge embarrassment in the CCMA and Labour Courts. I suggest companies like Corobrik take steps to ensure their executives are up to date on how to conduct fair and equitable hearings.

I suppose Allin Dangers, the company-appointed chair, who appears to be a senior person in the company, was following orders to get rid of Pretorius and others at all cost. But how does he live with his conscience, getting rid of fellow employees the way he did?

Charles Robert
North Riding





Pravin's eye... Spies, damned spies

Journey of love

IN RESPONSE TO KERRIN WILKINSON'S experiences as a trans-racial adoptive parent ("Black like me", *nose191*), we adopted 15 and 13 years ago and it wasn't so fraught. Maybe because we were foster parents for a while (with three kids) before adopting? Our son was kept in a "place of safety" till he was six months old, when he could have been with us at two weeks. We got plenty of the "waddabout his/her culture?" from ignorant unthinking people (we smiled and ignored, despite one having a Nigerian father, one an Indian father, one a mixed-race mother – the "concerned idiots" assumed all were Zulu).

It's been a wonderful journey.

It astonishes me how the adoptive parents' "race" is thought important for the child and is allowed to trump their simply being good people.

Pete Swanepoel
Montclair

■ WHAT A BRAVE COUPLE. I SALUTE YOU both for taking on this responsibility. It's a shame the powers-that-be don't recognise your service to our communities. How lucky these little guys are to have parents like you!

Adrian Ullingworth
Pinetown
(See "Adoption hopes", pg 22)

Light in the darkness

JOHN FETTER'S MISLEADING STATEMENT that "solar power does not work at

night when we want to turn our lights on" (*Letters, nose190*) shows his ignorance in assessing solar power today. May I commend you on your incisive editorial response to it!

My daughter who lives in Roosevelt Park, has installed solar power in her home and when all around in her area are in complete darkness thanks to a power outage, she and her family are sitting watching television, working on their computers or enjoying a warm supper in a heated home, all thanks to solar power. There are myriad such examples to be found worldwide.

Hendrik Davel
Douglasdale, Johannesburg

Insured against disability claims

WHEN NEST LIFE REPUDIATED A CLAIM FOR a domestic worker who lost her forearm (*Letters, nose189*) in the De Doorns bus crash on the grounds that she was not permanently disabled, the insurer suggested that if she was unhappy with its ruling, she should contact the Long-Term Insurance Ombudsman – which she did. Eventually the Ombudsman's office obtained from NestLife a copy of the policy (duly initialled but which the family had neither seen nor signed), which contained a definition of disability. The last catch-all sentence stated "This cover excludes loss of limbs, the sight of both eyes or the loss of the use of one limb and sight in one eye". This renders the policy around disability a complete sham and one would have expected the Ombudsman to frown on such immoral policy conditions, especially when these

Old Roads

The road out of Klerksdorp is a hard road.

The road to Potch, to Jo'burg – people get killed.

There was a smashed-up car on top of a building, and an aeroplane on the roof of a petrol station. I don't think that one was an accident but as a child I did.

The road to Braamfontein – where I studied the city's history to teach to children – I never found out who this Braam was, and the other Bram, no one spoke of him; I just taught the syllabus, the names of roads – Barry Hertzog, Jan Smuts, D.F. Malan and Hendrik Verwoerd.

Robben Island was a land beyond the sea.

Christine Coates
(from *Homegrown*, Modjaji Books)

policies are sold to poor people. Instead, they simply forwarded the small print to the victim to justify why NestLife had repudiated the claim.

There are thousands of poor people out there coughing up monthly premiums for these worthless policies, and the Ombudsman clearly doesn't give a hoot.

Ian Pringle
Constantia



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Road rage over N3 plans

The article in *nose* 190 headed “The Road to Ruin” begs a response to set the record straight.

In a typically alarmist, controversy-causing article, *Noseweek* has chosen to proffer an all-too-simplistic argument: why build a new roadway across the Drakensberg when Van Reenen’s Pass can be improved?

The Van Reenen’s Pass was built in 1961. Through the years sections of the road were widened, realigned or resurfaced to maintain it to the highest standards and accommodate the growing traffic volumes.

The alignment of the road, the steep gradients and the sharp curves mean that, from an engineering and safety perspective, it will be impractical, due to the outlined geotechnical limitations, to make further extensive upgrades and the safety of the road-user would be at risk and compromised. An alternative, complementary road is the only viable alternative.

The proposed De Beers Pass section of the N3 will be a 99 km dual carriageway linking Keeversfontein in KwaZulu-Natal with Warden in the Free State. It crosses the Drakensberg escarpment about 30 km to the north of the existing road and will reduce the distance between the Tugela Plaza and Warden by more than 15km.

The R103/N3 past Harrismith and across Van Reenen’s Pass will remain in place and will be maintained by SANRAL according to the standards applicable to all national roads.

Once the De Beers Pass has been completed there will thus be two highways crossing the Berg, which will significantly ease current congestion on the long and winding Van Reenen’s Pass and improve the safety, comfort and productivity of all road-users.

SANRAL is concerned about the growing number of traffic incidents on the Van Reenen’s Pass route, that result in the closure of the road and great inconvenience. Total closure time increased from just less than 80 hours on the southbound road in 2011 to 96.5 hours in 2013. On the northbound road this grew from 88.25 to 102 hours. This can be attributed to growing traffic volumes on a mountainous road known for its steep gra-

dients, choke points and bottlenecks.

A new highway will help eliminate frustrations experienced by road-users, especially during peak periods, reduce travel time between Tugela Plaza and Warden by up to 30 minutes and increase safety by 30 to 60 percent. But the most important benefit will be its impact on the broader economic development of the region. A number of studies and policy papers produced in recent years – including the National Development Plan, the White Paper on National Transport and the Road Infrastructure Strategic Framework – have emphasised the urgent need for a good road network to expedite the movement of goods and people, facilitate trade, create employment and reduce infrastructural bottlenecks.

The De Beers Pass road meets these national objectives, and will expedite rejuvenation of the country’s most important logistics corridor. At its Durban terminus the road will contribute to long-term expansion of our busiest port, meeting growing demands on the movement of imports and exports vital to national and regional economies.

Initial studies indicate that more than 26 600 jobs – direct and indirect – will be created over the life of the project and the transfer of skills that occurs with the project will result in lasting benefits to communities.

Because the existing Van Reenen road will remain operational, the impact on the economy of towns such as Harrismith will be marginal, and reduce conflict between local and through-traffic, improving traffic safety and mobility. Road-users will have a choice of two roads and access to tourism and leisure attractions in the region will remain intact.

With Durban handling over 40% of imports and exports and Gauteng being the country’s economic heartland (generating over 33% of GDP), there is need for the best economic and technical solutions to ensure the flow of freight between these two points.

The Durban-Free State-Gauteng corridor, by far the most important economic corridor in the country, is expecting massive increases in freight volumes, from 762 million tons a year

in 2011 to 1.93 billion tons by 2041.

Thus an alternate route is imperative to reduce logistics, operational and transport costs; encourage infrastructure investment, create jobs and improve safety levels.

Vusi Mona

General Manager of Communications,
Sanral, Johannesburg

■ When I first visited van Reenen’s pass 55 years ago as an engineering student, my companion, an SAR&H engineer, was at some pains to point out the unstable geology of the pass. At my last visit some 30 years back the road had rather alarming structural cracks. There’s every possibility that one day the whole lot will slide off toward the sea. I suggest Barry Sergeant take a hike up and down the road, accompanied by a geologist or geomorphologist and a road engineer, to explain what he’s looking at in terms of risks and costs.

Should Van Reenen’s be closed, the alternatives are Olifantshoek or Majuba. Neither would cope. Geologically De Beer’s Pass is the preferable route. It has massive and stable sandstone formations. The rest of the route will undoubtedly affect some wetlands, but mitigating measures are available.

Unlike e-tolling, there will be an alternative – Van Reenen’s (while the road is still there, that is).

As for Harrismith – well, the same fate befell Villiers, Warden, Lady-smith, Estcourt, and Mooi Rivier on N3, Winburg, Colesberg, Uncle Charlies roadhouse and Bela Bela on N1, Humansdorp and Margate on N2 and many others. Only Uncle Charlies didn’t survive. Harrismith is no special case.

Paul Fanner

By email

■ Regarding Mr Fanner’s letter (above), the De Beers Pass route was designed more than 40 years ago when the engineering preference was regarded as the way to go. Times and circumstances have changed: today people, jobs and livelihoods are paramount, water per capita is critical, and the will of the people matters.

Mr Fanner says impacts can be mitigated. Perhaps he can explain how a wetland continues to function – store water, attenuate floods, purify water,

sequester carbon and support biodiversity – with a road built over it. The De Beers road will destroy nearly four square kms of prime wetland under its footprint, whereas the alternative will displace just over one square km of already damaged wetland. This isn't all. Roads concentrate and dirty runoff, and my estimate is that mitigation is only about 30% effective.

SA is a water-scarce country. As our population doubles in the next 35 years our predicament will worsen two-fold. If a mountain is crumbly engineers can fix the road over it, at some expense. But lost water resources are poorly fixable at any price.

Perhaps Mr Fanner might like to tell a packed Harrismith town hall that thousands of jobs and still more livelihoods are less important than making the Jhb-Durban route 14 km shorter and 10 minutes quicker (with users paying a massively increased toll fee to service a new R10 billion debt).

Mike Mentis
By email

■ Unless engineers and geologists get out of “tunnel vision” they could destroy the whole environment before they wipe the “sh*t from their eyes”. It's tragic an engineer can be so flip-pant about the destruction of wetlands, actually believing that mitigating measures overcome the destructive effect that road building, runoff and tunnelling has on the environment in general and wetlands in particular.

In his expert report on the impact of the De Beers Pass road Mike Mentis did well to indicate two issues at play:

1. That the DEIR mis-represent and downplay the impact of roads on wetlands and,
2. Mitigation practices applied to the impact roads have on wetlands. are truly ineffective.

I strongly advise Paul Fanner to research this topic – a task less daunting than hiking the pass with a bunch of engineers and geologists (God forbid).

But if you were to take Paul up on his hiking challenge, don't fixate on the massive sandstone or lack thereof – engineers are good at the rectification of structural deficiencies (although I think the N3 down Town Hill in PMB has got the better of them).

Instead cast your eyes further afield – to the grassland (somewhat overgrazed) which is diminishing in size but in this particular area is home to a unique flocking ritual of Grey Crowned, Blue and, recently, the scarce Wattle Cranes. A sight to behold where some 400 of these birds get together to teach their young about the “facts of life”. Without this ritual they are doomed. It is the grassland habitat they seek not the sandstone that so attracts the engineers. The De Beers Pass road cuts right through the middle of this pristine grassland. For the birds there is nowhere else to go. The rest of their habitat is already destroyed – a lot of it by the existing N3. Why, for goodness sake threaten these birds, which include our national bird, for a mere 14km saving on a trip between JHB and Durban?

At the top of Van Reenen's Pass, look towards the east and you'll see a miniature version of Table Mountain. Nothing spectacular in that, except

that it hosts one of the remaining 100 breeding pairs of Bearded Vultures left in the Southern Hemisphere. There is documented evidence from, among others, the Katse Dam that any development within 10km radius will be the end of an era. The proposed De Beers Pass route will pass within 3km of the nest. Funny that the demise of these splendid birds will see increased activity from ravens feeding on road kill.

I could go on to include the Sungazer Lizard and a host of special flowers and precious trees that are to be destroyed because of our insensitive attitude and 14 km on the “road less travelled”.

I will not comment much on the destruction of Harrismith as a town as, according to Paul, it will join an endless list – which apparently makes it OK.

There is an existing road that can be upgraded and improved with the help of geologists and engineers, avoiding great losses to nature and the environment and misery to large numbers of people Surely we can all agree on that? Let's not be led by deceit and greed.

Rick Dillon
Chairman Nelsons Kop Conservancy



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Roger Kebble – a haunted man

ON 24 AUGUST 2015, ROGER KEBBLE SHOT himself to death. Ten years earlier, to the day, he'd been ejected as chairman of two once-famous mining companies, JCI and Randgold & Exploration (Randgold), in a putsch instigated by Investec and backed by Allan Gray.

Equally unceremoniously, on that same date in 2005, Roger's son Brett was ejected as CEO of JCI, Randgold and a third mining company, Western Areas, then owner of South Deep, a big developing gold mine west of Johannesburg (see page 9). One of the most tumultuous decades in South African mining history had suddenly ended.

A month after the putsch, Brett Kebble's bullet-riddled body was found in his Mercedes on the roadside near his Johannesburg home. He had been shot by hired hitmen. A decade later, Roger was found in similar circumstances, but with a single, self-inflicted bullet-wound in the head.

Roger was habitually in denial as to the extent of Brett's criminal activities, but at the same time relished the high life they funded. He'd spent decades battling up the mining ranks, before making it as a mine captain. From there he moved into the cut-throat world of mining contracting. But it was Brett who walked the talk.

An uncommon genius, Brett, in less than a decade, engineered and executed the greatest white-collar crime spree in national history. Along with a few cronies, he orchestrated the theft of R1.9 billion in cash, by stealing and selling Randgold's listed stock portfolio. Of this, R378 million went to the personal bank accounts of Brett and his associates – including his father.

Roger Kebble's other great windfall – surprisingly, largely legitimate – came in mid-2006, when he sold his stake in Simmer & Jack, acquired for virtually nothing at Brett's suggestion, for more than R100 million.

Theft victim Randgold was meanwhile preparing to sue various parties, including Roger, for billions. But on 1 October 2006, he managed to settle with Randgold for a relatively trifling R30 million. The cosy deal was negotiated by Peter Henry Gray, the Investec-appointed CEO of both JCI and Randgold (and former CEO of T-Sec, Brett's money-laundering stockbroker). A costly trial and the embarrassment of having everyone's dirty linen washed in public was avoided.

Roger Kebble was from then on treated like a mountain of Teflon. Keep in mind that

claims against son Brett's insolvent estate amounted to R2.7 billion – and Roger had been a director of all the companies involved.

Most curious was a company called BNC, formed in 1997 as the paper manifestation of Brett Kebble's doomed genius. Brett was the sole known shareholder, and he and Roger were its directors. After Brett's death, Roger more than once admitted that BNC was "simply a vehicle for fraud".

In May 1997, BNC had raised R125 million from SocGen Johannesburg, subsidiary of a large French bank. Over the years, substantial chunks of this debt would be repaid – with cash pilfered from Randgold. Roger Kebble swore he "was never aware of or involved in" BNC's activities, yet forensic reports show (for example) that on 18 March 1999 he and Brett signed a letter on behalf of BNC, undertaking to reduce BNC's debt to SocGen.

BNC collapsed in a heap in 2006. Randgold launched a formal enquiry into its affairs. But in February 2008, Randgold wrote to the liquidators asking, in effect, that Roger Kebble be regarded as royal game; that is, left alone. The next month, Randgold's attorneys, Van Hulsteyns, repeated the instruction.

At the BNC enquiry, it was soon clear that all roads led to JCI CEO Peter Henry Gray, for his involvement in the funding of BNC and the laundering of its ill-gotten funds.

Randgold CEO Marais Steyn – originally appointed financial director by Investec's Nurek – at that stage decided to cease funding the enquiry, effectively closing it down. As effectively, claims of R144 million against SocGen and T-Sec were cancelled and Roger was off the hook there too.

BNC was the ultimate manifestation of the devious and ambivalent relationship between son and father.

For good or ill, most of Brett's preferences were abhorred by Roger, who was in the habit of referring to Brett as his "second daughter". Perhaps the only thing Brett had in common with his father and brother was a strong appetite for hedonistic indulgence.

Wrong-headed as Roger's relationship was with his eldest son, so Brett's attempts to impress his father were hopelessly contrived. If I was ever visiting Brett and Roger pitched up, usually with some or other paperwork needing Brett's signature, Brett would make him wait, no matter how much Roger paced up and down or attempted to intrude. Brett needed to assert and show off his dominance. At one stage, Brett was a director of some



Roger Kebble

two dozen companies; Roger of just short of 100. There is every reason to believe that Brett inserted Roger into all these positions – impossible for any normal person to manage – to impress and manipulate him.

It was Brett who presented Roger as a mining engineer – which he was not. It was at Brett's behest that Roger, at one stage or another, was chairman of all key companies in which Brett was invested.

Roger swimmingly enjoyed the millions, and denied anything that didn't suit him. His band of followers ("he's nothing more than a rogue, but he's not evil") protected him from anything vaguely resembling justice, yet it was the same faltering law enforcement system that Roger complained bitterly about from the moment Brett died.

The vaguely copy-cat manner of Roger's suicide, and its date, suggests a motive. There are a couple of other potential motives: Randgold was suing Gold Fields for billions (earlier this year, Gold Fields joined JCI and Roger Kebble to the action, putting him back in the firing line); and the taxman suddenly popped up with a demand for R50 million. (Roger had clearly failed to make the political contributions necessary to secure immunity, as his son had done.)

In one way or another, Brett – "... a high-powered mutant of some kind ... too weird to live and too rare to die", to borrow from Hunter S. Thompson – haunted Roger to the end. – **Barry Sergeant**

Read the small print before signing up with Capitec

Before you rush to sign up with Capitec, read the small print... Capitec, the fast-spawning high-street microlender that has pulled in more than six million mostly first-time bank clients with the lure of peanut admin charges of just R5 per month, has some far-reaching small-print conditions that would-be customers might want to note.

When Terry J. Theunissen of Bellville joined the six million with his R100 deposit to open a savings account in July, Capitec consultant Luke Adonis assured him the only requirements were his ID book and proof of permanent residence.

The bank card had already been issued when Adonis presented him with the small technicality of having to "just quickly sign this savings account agreement here and here and here" – after which it was whisked away. Some insistence was necessary before a copy was provided for Theunissen to study at his leisure.

That evening he was appalled when he read what he had signed up for:

- Capitec could obtain, confirm and keep any personal and confidential information from his employer; his bank, any credit bureau "or any other person for any business reason of the bank";
- Capitec could give out his personal details and information about his account to his employer, his bank, any credit bureau "or any other person for any business reason of the bank";
- He would not have any claim against the bank for obtaining and thus sharing his personal and confidential information;
- The bank could use money in any of his accounts to pay itself "any amount owing to the bank" from his account;
- All card transactions were done at his risk and the bank would not be liable for any loss or theft resulting from his use of an ATM machine, self-service terminal or other electronic device;
- If the bank brought legal action against him, he agreed to pay its legal costs, including collection commission.



Theunissen considered these terms he had so blithely agreed not "mere technicalities", but extremely onerous. Next morning he repudiated his acceptance of the agreement. He demanded that his brand new savings account be closed with immediate effect, a refund be made of his R100 deposit and confirmation given that all personal and confidential information he had provided would be expunged from the bank's records. Failing which he would bring an urgent high court application for an order on those terms.

Capitec has refunded Theunissen's R100 and closed his savings account, as requested. But his personal information will remain on file. "As a bank we are not allowed to delete a client's record from our banking system as if it never existed," writes Richard Sofisa in Complaint Management. Sofisa's four-page letter adds: "Legal entities such as the South African Reserve Bank require us to keep a proper record of all our clients. As a result, the integrity of our banking system cannot be put at risk in manipulating the existence of client relationships or records. We cannot delete information as if they (sic) were never captured/existed."

In compliance with the Financial Intelligence Centre Act, the personal information Theunissen provided would be kept for five years.

Capitec notes that Theunissen sent a copy of his termination notification to *Noseweek*. "Our rights, should we suffer any damages as a result thereof, are reserved," runs the stern close to Sofisa's lengthy epistle. ■

Digging into South Deep

The bosses will probably pocket around R1 billion in the world's second greatest mining scandal. **By Barry Sargeant**

MAJOR CORPORATE SCANDALS have a habit of remaining undetected for years. When the fat lady finally sings, the overwhelming question is invariably “why didn’t anyone say anything, long ago?”

This 27 September marked the ten-year anniversary of the death of Brett Kebble. His greatest legacy – besides the biggest unprosecuted fraud in South African history – is South Deep gold mine, west of Johannesburg.

South Deep, frequently punted as the deepest and potentially richest gold mine in the world – it isn’t – has developed a unique life of its own on the stockmarket. That, and its new ownership and management, call for closer examination. For a start, it’s time to ask what the managers and board of Gold Fields, proud owners of the mine, have done to deserve remuneration of more than R700 million in the five years since Nick Holland took the CEO’s seat in May 2008.

At that rate, in a few years from now, Gold Fields’s bosses would have pocketed around R1 billion, in reward for what more and more people suspect might turn out to be the world’s second greatest mining scandal.

By which time Nick Holland will no doubt be long gone. It hinges on the South Deep mine. For well over a decade, wizards have made outrageous promises about this 3-kilometre-deep hole, to the extent that the project now ranks as one of the worst cases of “over-promise and under-deliver” in

the global history of stock-market investing.

According to the solemn promise of the chairman, in the 2001 annual report of Western Areas (which then held 50% of South Deep): “Full commissioning is currently scheduled for August 2003. The company expects gold production to increase from 400,000 ounces in 2002 to 700,000 ounces per year by 2007. Thereafter production is expected to exceed 750,000 ounces per year. It will do so for at least 72 years, according to independently-confirmed evaluations. Average cash costs at full production are estimated at US\$135 per ounce and average total costs at US\$175 per ounce.”

South Deep has never achieved anything vaguely like this, including output since 2007, when it was taken over by Gold Fields, one of the world’s biggest gold diggers. Today, of Gold Fields’s total global reserves of 52 million ounces, 38 million ounces, or 73%, are represented by South Deep.

Here’s the problem: there has been no evidence that Gold Fields can mine the South Deep ore economically; most recent (2014) production costs were above US\$1,700 an ounce, when the average gold price was US\$1,266. Production for 2014 barely exceeded 200,000 ounces.

Given this is the case, the 38 million ounces of “reserves” at South Deep are not mineable, and therefore non-existent from a balance sheet point of view.

Since taking control of the CEO’s office, Holland has been rewarded to the



Gold Fields CEO Nick Holland

tune of more than R150 million, in return for performance that falls flat by virtually every imaginable measure. How has he got away with it? While Oscar Wilde has been credited with the insight that there is no accounting for taste, Holland is sometimes known as “Liberace”, in view of his rather strange taste in hair colour, clothing and gold jewellery – and, no doubt, by Liberace’s two-decade spell as the world’s highest-paid entertainer.

Holland may have made it as an entertainer, but it’s not exactly what he’s being paid for. In 2012, he hauled home R45 million, including gains from selling shares in his beloved Gold Fields.

If South Deep is a safe long-term bet, why was Holland selling shares?

Before Holland, Gold Fields, which traces its roots back to Cecil John Rhodes, ranked among the greatest gold miners ever. Its two crowning assets, Driefontein and Kloof, both west of Johannesburg, once stood among the most productive mines of any kind, anywhere. Every mine, however, finally goes over a hump and into a period of decline, before it finally closes.

For Gold Fields, South Deep, also west of Johannesburg, has been traded as representing the best of what Gold Fields once was. But South Deep, increasingly, is an illusion. In the words of Hemingway: “In Africa a thing is true at first light and a lie by noon.”

When Holland took the CEO’s seat, there were two key themes in place. First, Driefontein and Kloof had indeed gone over the hump; these were conveniently unbundled into the eager, waiting, well-fed arms of Neal Froneman (fresh from his prior disastrous venture into Uranium One – where he built a plant that never produced uranium, instead generating a US\$2.8 billion impairment).

Gold Fields, indeed, unbundled all its South African assets, excluding South Deep, early in 2013; these were separately listed – under the name of “Sibanye Gold” – in Johannesburg and New York, mirroring Gold Fields’s long-held listings. At the time of acquiring South Deep, Gold Fields waxed effusively of the operational “synergies” that would develop with Kloof, given the two are neighbours.

Gold Fields’s apparently fatal attraction to South Deep appears to have been doomed from long before the start. The curse became available to prospective buyers after the Keble era fell apart in August 2005. The South Deep deposit had long been described – certainly by Brett Keble – as the greatest unexploited gold-ore body in the world. There is certainly some truth to this.

During 2006 and 2007, Gold Fields bought out the owners of South Deep, and eliminated the haemorrhaging hedge book of Western Areas, at a total cost of US\$3 billion. Earlier this year, presentation materials published by Gold Fields put the mineral resources within South Deep at 76 million ounces. Of this, 38 million ounces were



Gold Fields director Cheryl Carolus

classified within the strict definition of “mineral reserves”.

For some perspective; a world-class gold mine is generally classified as such if it holds reserves of a million ounces. By that standard, South Deep comprises dozens of world-class gold mines, all in one place. There are at least two catches, however. First, depth: South Deep ranks as the seventh-deepest mine in the world, mining at around 3,000 metres from surface. It’s some way off AngloGold Ashanti’s Mponeng gold mine, also on the West Rand, which works at around 1,000 metres deeper than South Deep.

Second, the nature and extent, of the reefs: no less than 16 reef bands in the deposit contribute to its enormous aggregated gold resources. These include the well-known Ventersdorp Contact Reef (VCR), a narrow reef at the top of the system. This overlies the thick Elsburg multi-reef series, which in turn overlies the thick Massive multi-reef series.

It’s the very thick multi-reef series which make the overall deposit something of a freak. Here’s the simple question: can this deposit ever be converted to a reserve? The answer depends entirely on whether a successful mining method can be designed, implemented and sustainably maintained.

Recent history indicates that South Deep’s various owners have suffered deeply and savagely from delusions of grandeur, and have quite possibly been

mentally unstable. The records show that Gold Fields only extended the terrible hype that had been drummed up by Brett and Roger Keble.

In its main 2009 filing with the SEC in Washington, Gold Fields stated: “The continued build-up in production at South Deep is scheduled to increase production for fiscal 2010 to a total 300,000 ounces, and to build up to an annualised production rate of between 750,000 and 800,000 ounces by the end of 2014...”

This, coming from one of the world’s oldest and biggest gold diggers, has turned out to be unadulterated rubbish. Nonetheless, between 2009 and 2014, while the horrors of under-delivery mounted at South Deep, remuneration for the brilliantly-achieving management and board of geniuses at Gold Fields increased from R21.3 million to R176 million a year.

According to one of South Africa’s top mining engineers (with years of experience at Elsburg, the south division of Western Areas and forerunner of South Deep), “the most important reason for South Deep failing to deliver on production forecasts is management incompetence”.

History shows that hard rock, labour-intensive mining (as in South Africa’s gold and platinum mines) demands years and years of managerial stability, along with tried-and-tested methods, to be successful.

Since 2008, Gold Fields has been converting South Deep to mechanised mining, designed to reduce the company’s dependence on labour. The globally-known Marikana tragedy at Lonmin’s platinum mine, has its roots in attempts to convert conventional mining to mechanisation. A decade ago, an American geologist, Brad Mills, brought in to run Lonmin, introduced revolutionary – and impractical – HR thinking, which had the effect of seriously alienating the highly competent technical and managerial teams. After two years or so, there was a mass management exodus. They were replaced by paper specialists, opening the door for the new labour union AMCU, leading eventually to the massacre and tragedy at Marikana.

Similar unhealthy roots have been finding fertile ground at South Deep: the record shows that different owners of South Deep have

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Breaking the rules

Cape Town Club members in furious wrangle. By Donwald Pressly

WHEN THE CHAIRMAN OF THE Cape Town Club told her the knives were out for her, Susanne Faussner-Ringer should have known her fate had already been sealed by the ageing white Old Boy junta (yes, there was a coup – see *nose162*) which now runs that once-prestigious “duly registered public benefit organisation”.

When Leinster Hall, old premises of the Cape Town Club, went up in smoke in June, many saw it as symbolic – in more ways than one. Burned-out or not, a warring spirit undoubtedly lives on among the remnant of its membership, now ensconced in a Herbert Baker pile right next door to the Western Cape High Court.

The Victorian gentlemen’s club has in recent years come to accept women among its numbers. Reluctantly so, in the case of Faussner-Ringer, owner of the luxury Greenways Hotel in Claremont, who, after seven years of membership, was given a dismissal notice by the club in May last year.

But on 1 June, still safely within the statutory two-week period in which she was entitled to lodge an appeal – and with her subs fully paid in advance – Faussner-Ringer decided she was entitled to take part in the club’s ceremonial members’ walk, from the old to the new premises. Although that event was rained out, she nonetheless hoped she could network at the celebratory reception and garner signatures in support of her appeal.

“You’re not welcome”, warned club chairman Philip Engelen, evidently unhappy to see her darken the doorstep of the Queen Victoria Street premises, and asked her to leave forthwith. With that, Faussner-Ringer slipped away from the

do in the billiard room and went downstairs to the bar, where she ordered a drink to mull over her predicament.

Nearby, huddled in agitated conversation, were two other club VIPs, club manager Eugene van der Westhuizen and board chairman James Sedgwick. Unwilling to boot her out themselves, they summoned security company ADT to do the deed. A bemused ADT guard arrived, shook his head, backed off and left.

What had Faussner-Ringer done to upset the Old Boys? The club objects to a private conversation she allegedly had with former club secretary Gary Rockliffe-Fidler – who had been temporarily brought back to oversee the move. She allegedly asked him about rumours that edible fare from the club had been finding its way to a delicatessen in Woodstock, owned by Jeanne, wife of club manager Van der Westhuizen.

Faussner-Ringer says the charge is “entirely concocted” and she did not say anything of the kind; she merely raised “issues of procedure at the AGM”.

This is now part of the High Court record after Faussner-Ringer brought an application for her reinstatement as a member. She says Rockliffe-Fidler – who has since again left the club – initiated the disputed conversation after the AGM on 27 February last year, and that on 17 April she received notice of the written complaint of misconduct lodged by Rockliffe-Fidler.

The notice advised her that she was “entitled to make representation to the board either verbally or in person, in writing or through a third person, provided the board is notified of who(m) such person is, in writing, with (her) factual position within 48 hours of receipt of the notice”.



The notice was issued by board member Reynhard Carelse, a labour lawyer whose services are also used by Independent Newspapers’ chairman Iqbal Survé as a hatchet man for legal disputes with his journalists.

Carelse accused Faussner-Ringer of “malicious gossip”; that she had voiced concerns over R20,000 in payments to the club’s executive chairman James Sedgwick which she’d noticed in the financial records; and that she had queried why the club’s executive chairman was receiving payment from the club. Carelse alleged she had told Rockliffe-Fidler to “visit the delicatessen shop owned by Mrs Van der Westhuizen because he would see club stock and equipment in use at said premises”.

Faussner-Ringer says the club “consistently refused my requests for documentation pertinent to the disciplinary hearings” in May. She also complains that, though they knew they were about to haul her over the coals, they had no compunction in banking her R8,250 annual member’s fee in March, for the 2014/15 financial year. She got none of the money back and was dismissed as a member on 14 July (Bastille Day).

At her disciplinary hearing, the second charge – involving the R20,000 al-

Leinster Hall, former premises
of the Cape Town Club



Susanne Faussner-Ringer

legedly paid to Sedgwick – was dropped. Carelse presided as legal officer.

Fortunately for the club, Carelse is able to combine considerable legal intellect while presiding as both prosecutor and judge in a disciplinary. In his own words: “I was asked to consider recusing myself because of these purported procedural issues raised. I have considered it and am of the opinion that I should not recuse myself, as the purported procedural prejudice has not been shown or proven. Further, I am not convinced or persuaded that prejudice... shown will be a test for procedural fairness.”

Although the “Sedgwick” charge was dropped as it could not be substantiated, Carelse nevertheless deemed it fit to find the allegations were “serious and malicious and directed at a club employee [Van der Westhuizen] and office bearer [Sedgwick]” and it was decided Mrs Van der Westhuizen need not be called to give witness because Carelse “already knew what she would testify”.

In his summary of evidence and argument Carelse reported that in charge one (the Van der Westhuizen matter) Faussner-Ringer had “implied that Eugene van der Westhuizen had club stock and equipment at the business premises of his wife, and that this was obtained in

an untoward or underhanded manner”. (In the court papers he said the R20,000 “Sedgwick” payment was for his monthly salary.)

The prosecution’s star witness, Chairman Engelen, testified that Faussner-Ringer had, in fact, said the same or a very similar thing to him on other occa-

A woman member is accused of malicious gossip about the general manager and his wife

sions, in that he would “see club stock and equipment in use at said premises”.

Engelen’s further testimony was that at the time of her making these allegations “he brushed it off as the ranting of a lady who had had too much to drink”.

Carelse reported that Engelen had been tasked with suggesting to Faussner-Ringer that she simply admit to her crimes and quietly resign. Although that conversation had not transpired, he, Engelen, had warned her on 12 April 2014, during a farewell party at the club’s old premises, that the “board has got the knives out for you”.

She had refused on principle to resign.

But the club junta was empowered by rules such as: “Any person ceasing to be a member by resignation or expulsion... will not be permitted to enter the club premises as described in rule 2.5.7”.

The latter rule applies to a person “having launched an appeal within the 14 days appeal period”.

Also, “...pending the decision of the appeal, the offending member shall be regarded as suspended from all privileges of membership”.

Sedgwick had told her: “We cannot be clearer and I do not expect to see you in the club premises again.”

Faussner-Ringer was found guilty

by the junta, but was denied a copy of Carelse's findings and recommendation that she be axed. A friendly member sneaked her a copy.

Fast-forward to a special general meeting (SGM) called to deal with the Faussner-Ringer debacle. She was not invited to attend or present argument. Although it was about her allegations listed above (bar the Sedgwick R20,000 issue, that had been struck off by Carelse), the members were not informed about the kernel of the so-called "malicious rumour".

All they were told was that the board had decided to expel Faussner-Ringer and they were given two options: "It is resolved that members attending [the SGM] on 14 July 2014 upheld the executive board's decision to terminate the membership of the 'offending member' as contemplated in terms of (rule) 2.5 and furthermore... dismisses the appeal lodged against such decision". They were told Rule 8.2.3 prescribes that "the executive board shall call an SGM pertaining to a member who has been expelled

The dismissed member was not invited to attend a special meeting or to present argument against

from membership". Board decisions of this kind could only be overturned by a two-thirds majority of members at the meeting.

A second resolution put to the meeting was crafted in such a way that the board would have to resign if Faussner-Ringer

won her right to remain a member. Resolution 2, which was voted down 28 to 9, read: "It is automatically resolved as a result of the reversal of the board's decision... (constituted) a vote of no confidence in the board which shall therefore dissolve with immediate effect."

It went on to state that the employment contract of general manager Eugene van der Westhuizen would be terminated immediately as a result of a breakdown of the employment relations, should there be such an implied vote of no confidence in the Executive Board (on which he serves).

One club member, who is a former mayor, objected to the procedure as he hadn't seen any of the supporting documents. Another member objected to the fact that Faussner-Ringer wasn't given a hearing.

Susanne Faussner-Ringer's application launched in the Western Cape High Court seeks re-admission to the club. The respondent has repeatedly failed to provide the required documents pertaining to her dismissal. The case is ongoing. ■

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Kimberley mayor Alderman Lawrie Shuttleworth (in the middle), 100 years old, is Vice-President of the 130-year-old Kimberley club and great uncle of Mark



The long goodbye

SOUTH AFRICA'S ENGLISH-STYLE gentlemen's clubs, established in the second half of the 19th century when the British empire was at its zenith, are struggling to keep their doors open.

At the end of September, the Rand Club will "go into hibernation", says chairman David Williams, former deputy editor of the *Financial Mail*. No food and beverages will be served from 1 October.

The club has been struggling for some time. In 2013 it contracted a company, Umlumzani, to run the food and beverage operation, but this did not prove successful. The 45 staff members were not paid in full and about R700,000 in back pay is owed to them. Retrenchment of about 40 of the staff is expected to cost R1.8 million. The club is demanding R1 million from Umlumzani. In the meantime, at a recent special general meeting (SGM), members agreed to accept a R5m loan – interest free – from a member, who wished to remain anonymous. It needs to be paid back in installments only in 18 months time.

This will be used to assist in the payment of retrenchment packages. Five members of staff will continue a basic operation at the famous 1904-era clubhouse on the corner of Loveday and Fox streets, in downtown Johannesburg. Members who wish to visit the world-renowned library will be able to do so. For meals members will need to go to reciprocal clubs in Gauteng.

The loan will also be used for upkeep

of the building while a new hospitality operator is found, who, it has been suggested, might either buy a share in the building, or the whole building, while retaining the club as a tenant. Williams is optimistic the club will reopen in the new year. The general committee has been talking to the chairmen of the Inanda Club and the Johannesburg Country Club regarding a possible amalgamation. It was reported by a member at the SGM that talks had been held with Tourvest and Capital Hotels. There was the possibility of providing up to 60 bedrooms.

In May, Williams reported that Rand Club had not been able to produce an operating surplus for the last six years. "At present we have available funds of R1,108,800. Our monthly operating costs are R700,000, reduced to some extent (but not nearly covered) by rentals and income from usage and functions. In the event of full staff retrenchment, the estimated cost to the Club would be R1.8 million. This should illustrate the urgent need for this R5 million loan."

The loan decision was not taken without controversy. Former chairman Nicolette Erasmus has taken the club to court, arguing that the loan was being used as a pivot for the unidentified benefactor to buy the building. Williams told the SGM this was not a condition of the loan agreement. The club reported that the legal action – which is still ongoing – has been costly.

On the Rand Club website, an account of its history declares: "One might be so

bold as to say that Rand Club is Johannesburg." The site of its building was selected by none other than Cecil John Rhodes, in 1886 at the height of the gold mining boom, and opened in October 1887, 128 years ago. The gracious current club building dates back to just after the Anglo Boer War. Much of it was shipped in from England. Inside there is still a "Rhodes Room" with a magnificent painting of CJR.

Meanwhile the Kimberley Club and Boutique Hotel, which Rhodes also founded, in 1881, appears to be among the last viable survivors of the grand clubs. It has a solid membership, while its operations – the hiring of rooms and provision of food and beverages – are run by a hotel management company. Club members and hotel guests have full use of the club buildings and facilities. At the AGM in August the chair, Ricky Talbot, reported a modest profit for the 2014/15 year, but added that the hotel and club operations were synergistic: one probably would not survive without the other.

The Durban Club, at 1 Durban Club Lane, is now a tenant in its old building, which it sold to the Durban Manor Hotel. The Pietersburg Club in Polokwane – established in 1902 – remains financially stable, largely because it offers accommodation, conference and function facilities for rental. The St George's club, established in 1892, in Port Elizabeth, is a shell of its former self, having hived off many of its rooms to the legal fraternity. ■

IN SOUTH AFRICA, IT'S ARGUABLE THAT the biggest source of easy grey money – money earned by corrupt means not easily detected or provable – is the multi-billion rand state tender sector. Examples range from the notorious 1999 Arms Deal to the more recent Nkandla debacle.

In a benchmark 2007 tender case involving Phoenix Cash & Carry, heard in the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA), the Court observed that “Unfortunately, as experience in this court proves, the high standards that the Constitution sets seem to be more honoured in the breach than in the observance”. Since then, little, if any, reform has been formulated, never mind implemented, to counter the insidious process.

But what about the situation where a losing tender party goes berserk after a genuine winner has emerged? Such a twist in the familiar sagas of tender abuse was seen when an exceptionally valuable information-technology tender – said to be worth as much as R10 billion – ended up in the Constitutional Court in February 2014. The SCA had previously ruled that there were no irregularities and that both tender process and subsequent contract were valid. Given our history, this in itself may have seemed unusual.

But then the Constitutional Court ruled that the tender, awarded for five years and dated 3 February 2012, was invalid on two separate grounds: Firstly, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) had failed to objectively confirm the BEE credentials of the tender winner, Cash Paymaster Systems (CPS; a subsidiary of US-listed Net1 UEPS Technologies, a “leading provider of payment solutions and transaction processing services”).

Challenging the validity of the award was AllPay (Absa in all but name), the contender that had not made it to SASSA’s final round of tender adjudication.

SASSA is responsible for the payment of various social grants and related cash flows such as pensions, to millions of people. In court, it stated that it did not evaluate CPS’s BEE credentials because CPS was the only bidder left in the tender process. Besides, BEE counted for just 10 out of 100 points and would have made no difference to



The tender

Billion-rand grey money dispute offends Supreme Court of Appeal. By Barry Sergeant

the final decision.

Secondly, the Constitutional Court ruled the contract to be invalid because only one bidder had been permitted to progress to the final stage of the selection process, making cost comparisons at that final stage impossible.

In fact CPS was the only bidder to provide the biometric security measures specified in the tender, in effect winning the tender “prematurely”, as the court put it. And, as an aside, the tender bid’s financial proposals demonstrated that the CPS/Net1 effort was better-priced than that submitted

by AllPay. Given the circumstances, it could be argued that the tender was won unopposed, rather than “prematurely”.

The SCA had ruled that CPS had the solution sought by SASSA, and that AllPay simply did not. AllPay had tendered and proposed a security solution that it did not yet have and, indeed, did not believe was necessary. This arrogant attitude, hardly rare among South Africa’s banks, did not go down well at SASSA, which specified from the get-go that it was looking for a service provider that went



trap

Net1 was under investigation over possible contraventions of the US's Foreign Corrupt Practices Act

beyond the mere provision of a bank account.

SASSA was looking for identity-security measures that use biometric-based solutions (rely on human characteristics, e.g. fingerprints and retina colour and pattern). It is notable that PASA (the Payments Association of South Africa) is only now attempting to identify such technologies for use by banks – while studiously ignoring SASSA's solution, which already addresses the needs of more than 10 million people, more than half of all banking South Africans.

Meanwhile, CPS/Net1 continues to weigh the damage it suffered after winning the SASSA contract. On 30 November 2012, Net1 was advised by the US Department of Justice and that country's Security Exchange Commission (SEC) that Net1 was under investigation regarding possible

contraventions of the US's Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and other federal criminal laws, regarding certain alleged activities in South Africa.

While Net1 outright rejected these allegations on a number of occasions, the US actions, according to Net1, had "adversely impacted our business and reputation", and will continue to be exposed to a variety of negative consequences as a result of these investigations.

Early in 2014 the Constitutional Court ordered that the existing contract (with Net1) remain in place until a final decision had been taken on whether to award a new tender. SASSA eventually decided to open a new tender in October 2015.

On 10 May 2015, Net1 announced that it would not be bidding for the new tender. Net1 said the conclusion was reached after "careful consideration of all the relevant factors". It added that it planned to focus "more on providing products and services to South Africa's unbanked and under-banked citizens (including social-grant beneficiaries), but independently and without SASSA's limitations and constraints".

Net1, according to a spokesperson, "did not bid as it felt that this business was affecting its good name, and eroding shareholder value." It is of note that AllPay is also not bidding, despite the enormous efforts it put into having a new tender document issued; for example, court papers show that AllPay leaked the story to the *Mail&Guardian*. There is also little question of how the story was leaked to various investigative agencies.

Net1's attitude is that execution of its business plan "will no longer be limited by a five-year contract (or potentially shorter if legally challenged) and provides the company with the ability to freely determine pricing that is competitive and profitable and also removes any unknown or contingent liabilities associated with government contracts".

Serge Belamant, chairperson and CEO of Net1, says the company had helped bank 10 million people, registered 22 million on the social grants system, and "eliminated fraud in excess of R3 billion per annum".

In June 2015, Net1 announced that it had been informed that the SEC had completed its investigation into Net1

and had decided not to prosecute the company or its management. Net1 continues to await rulings from the US Department of Justice as well as the Hawks in South Africa.

Meanwhile Net1 has sought solutions to its South African headache. On 22 June this year it hosted an investor day in London. According to a company spokesperson, Net1 is “attempting to regain its rightful valuation, destroyed by the AllPay allegations and the US Department of Justice investigation that resulted. “The company is evaluating many options in this regard, including splitting the group into two units – a card-centric entity and a mobile-centric entity. These entities may well have separate listings in the US, Europe or the East, depending on the area of focus,” the spokesperson told Noseweek.

On the US NASDAQ exchange the Net1 stock price has on occasion during the past decade traded at levels above \$30 a share. After the company announced in late 2012 that it was being investigated the stock price fell to around \$5 a share. It has more recently traded closer to \$20 a share, giving Net1 a market valuation of about \$900 million.

Should Net1 decide to list in London, it’s of note that the UK’s FCPA rules and regulations are even more stringent than those in the US – ironically, now an attraction to Net1.

Back in South Africa, where tenders continue to be seen as easy meat, a further twist seems to have been developing around the needs and wants of SASSA. It is said to want to set up an in-house agency to handle pension and other pay-outs, and wants a percentage of the fees charged on this arrangement. The basis of this is not clear, given that SASSA is a state-controlled entity.

In the meantime Net1 has not communicated with SASSA on an exit strategy. The Constitutional Court made it quite clear that Net1 has the responsibility to continue to provide the payment service until SASSA takes the task in-house or awards the tender to a new entity, in accordance with the Court’s ruling. SASSA has stated that if a new contractor is appointed, SASSA will coordinate an orderly “phase-in/phase-out” process between the new contractor and CPS. ■

AllPay innuendo decried

LITIGANTS – AND THEIR TEAMS OF highly-paid lawyers – will go to the ends of the earth to win a case, or so it would seem in the instance of AllPay (Absa) vs Cash Paymaster Systems (CPS, owned by Net1). One typical strategy is to throw almost anything at the courts, another is to leak “scoops” to journalists who are too clever by half.

In this case, the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) found it necessary to voice its concerns over some of the tactics deployed by AllPay. The affidavits of AllPay, said the SCA, “evoke suspicion of corruption and dishonesty by innuendo and suggestion but without making the accusation directly... to clarify the position AllPay’s counsel was asked at the outset of the hearing whether corruption or dishonesty was any part of its case, and that was unequivocally disavowed”.

The court’s distaste for the situation was intense; it also stated that “whatever place mere suspicion of malfeasance or moral turpitude might have

in other discourse it has no place in the courts – either in the evidence or in the atmosphere in which cases are conducted. It’s unfair if not improper to impute malfeasance or moral turpitude by innuendo and suggestion”.

AllPay also made the rare choice of trying to introduce “new” evidence at the SCA level. The evidence came in an affidavit deposed by “a certain Mr Kay”. This person related a clandestine meeting with a Mr Tsalamandris, an employee of SASSA, who had provided administrative assistance when the tenders under question were considered. Kay recorded the conversation and on the same day wrote to the attorneys for AllPay.

About a month later an anonymous account of the conversation was published in the *Sunday Independent*. This was a year before AllPay’s lawyers tried to introduce the new evidence in the SCA. At the same time as leaking the information to the *Sunday Independent*, AllPay supplied a copy of the Tsalamandris transcript to the US Department of Justice: Net1 knows this because it was subsequently investigated by the same Department.

Sadly for AllPay, the SCA found the Tsalamandris transcript “discloses no admissible evidence of dishonesty” and “what is more, far from being weighty, the evidence carries no weight at all, and would not be admissible even if it had been deposed by Mr Tsalamandris himself”. Ouch.

A number of claims in the *Sunday Independent* were also referenced in various articles in the *Mail&Guardian*. Court papers indicate an instance where Craig McKune, author of some of the articles published in the *Mail&Guardian*, disclosed his source; at one point McKune says “Well AllPay gave us the story”.

All media claims of corruption against Net1 were struck from the record in the High Court; AllPay decided to abandon such claims (with costs) after Net1 objected to their inclusion. No doubt costs ran into millions, but given the stakes and Absa’s financial muscle, is that a sufficient or appropriate deterrent? ■

The Supreme Court of Appeal found it necessary to voice its concerns over some of the tactics deployed by AllPay

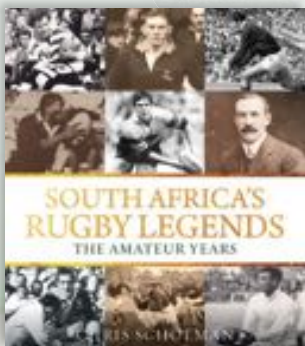
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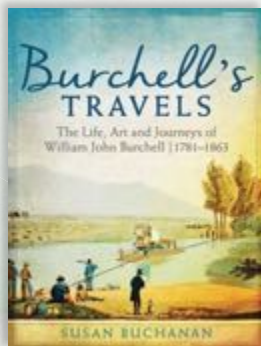
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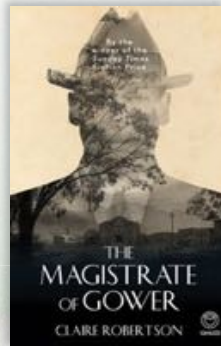
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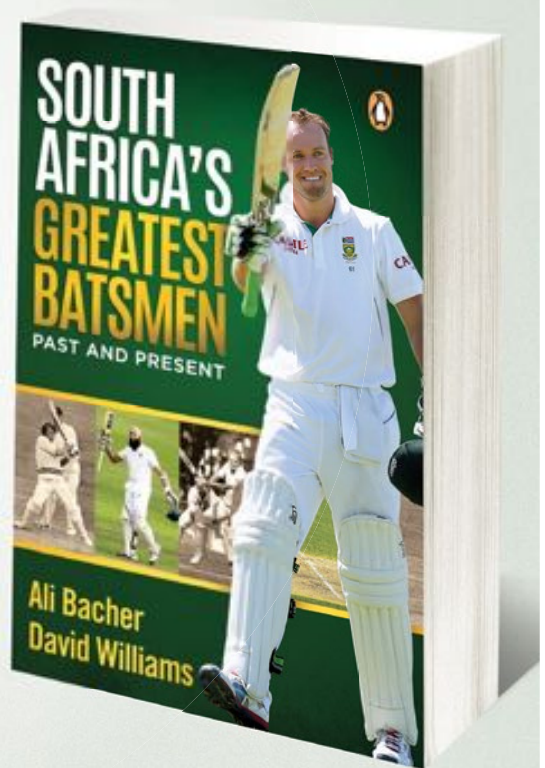
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How ruthless SAA grounded rival airlines

Elaborate dirty tricks campaign alleged. By Ciaran Ryan

AS TOLD LAST MONTH (NOSE191) national carrier SAA, amidst ongoing senior managerial disorganisation, is currently facing two massive claims, amounting to around R6bn after tax, one for R1bn by Comair and the other for R2.2 billion from businessman Robert Watson, owner of Rethabile, BEE minority shareholder of now-defunct Sun Air. The latter claim relates to charges that SAA conspired with Safair to take Sun Air out of operation, then taking its share of the market.

Ralph Boettger, CEO of Safair at the time, provided the liquidators (shortly after its demise in 1998) with a summary of events leading to the decline of Sun Air. He records a discussion with two Comair executives who believed Sun Air would have survived had SAA not intervened. It was estimated that 60% of Sun Air's capacity was picked up by SAA, 30% by Comair and 10% by Nationwide. The Comair executives believed that SAA benefited by as much as R200 million a year over the next 15 years.

The alleged conspiratorial agreement between SAA and Safair only came to light years later, and forms a crucial component of Watson's claim. What seems to have happened is that SAA purported to take majority control of Sun Air, balked when it came to paying for its shares, and promptly shut it down. This, says Watson's court documents, is one of several frauds committed by SAA.

In a record of events by Safair, the following seemingly incriminating statement shows what SAA was planning: "Mr Andre Viljoen (of SAA) did allude to the fact that they engineered Sun Air's closure and that Sun Air's closure is highly profitable to them. Mr Boettger mentioned R200 million per annum for a once-off payment of R50 million to Safair. Mr Viljoen said the R200 million

was towards turnover, not profit.

"Mr Boettger mentioned the additional turnover would go straight to the bottom line and Mr Viljoen smiled and agreed, ie. the conclusion is SAA carefully planned (as we knew) Sun Air's demise and was prepared, right from the outset, to pay a price of R50 million plus in fact the R20 million Rethabile debt – for ongoing profits of more than R200 million per annum irrespective of whether they acquired Sun Air or not."

Rethabile should have long disappeared into the undergrowth, but the wheels of justice moved inexorably forward, even if it took a generation or so to get there. Rethabile's shareholders argue that Sun Air was not insolvent, but this is in any event irrelevant to its claim.

Most, if not all, of the key players have since moved on to new gigs, barring perhaps Michael Katz, who was part of SAA's advisory team and who remains firmly ensconced at Edward Nathan

Sonnenberg (his name has recently resurfaced for being a member of the Safa board at the time a bribe was paid by the South African soccer authorities to secure the 2010 Fifa World Cup).

CEO Coleman Andrews pocketed R220 million for his 20-month stay at SAA before heading back to the US to head up a money-management firm for high-net-worth individuals. His web biography says he once led SAA in a "strategic, tactical and financial turnaround". That's a rather generous interpretation of what happened. Andrews was a former colleague of US presidential hopeful Mitt Romney at Bain Capital, and the R350 million profit reported by SAA under his tenure was pure puff, having been largely derived from the sale of the airline's assets. With his legacy in tatters, his contract was terminated 14 months early.

It was Coleman who opted to switch the SAA fleet to Boeing. Two years later, with Coleman out of the hot seat, SAA's managers moved to Airbus. According to Comair CEO Erik Venter the Airbus planes are now being delivered to SAA at 25% above market price.

Other airlines are punished for such folly but SAA has no such worries. Government appear always on hand to help out in a new moment of need.

SAA was never comfortable with competition, even before Coleman Andrews arrived in 1998, and has used every weapon at its disposal to club to death start-up airlines. Tiny Flitestar, with its fleet of six aircraft, was the first to fold. Flitestar knew what the flying public wanted and initially focused on the business traveller, offering excellent service and high levels of customer care – two areas where SAA was perceived to be weak. The arrival of a competitor to moribund SAA stung the national carrier. Back in the early 1990s Flitestar captured 25% of the domestic market and boasted a healthy carrying-

According to Comair CEO Erik Venter the Airbus planes are now being delivered to SAA at 25% above market price

load of 63%. SAA soon embarked on a campaign of dirty tricks, using its influence with the Safari ticketing system to make it appear that Flitestar flights were fully booked so that agents booked travellers on SAA instead. It got flight traffic control to give SAA preference so that Flitestar take-offs were delayed. SAA increased its commissions to travel agents and expanded its frequent flyer programme to the domestic market, knowing that its financial recklessness would be underwritten by government. Flitestar, with no taxpayer money to bail it out, succumbed to the bullying on 11 April 1994 when it ceased operating.

One down and just a few to go. SAA then took out Trek Airways by paying out its shareholders, Safren, Rentmeester Beleggings and the De Moelenaar family to cease any competitive airline services for five years.

That left just Sun Air, Nationwide and Comair, which was a 25% shareholder in Sun Air. By July 1999, Sun Air's fate was sealed, as was made clear by Coleman Andrews at a SAA board meeting on the 23rd of that month.

There was no way the market could sustain four, or even three, competitors, according to Andrews. He argued that Sun Air was in trouble. Its costs had multiplied, while load factors had dropped about 20% in the third quarter of 1999. He pointed out that the Comair directors who sat on the board of Sun Air resigned in July 1999 because they believed the company was trading while insolvent, and wanted to avoid personal liability.

It was clear, he said, that Sun Air was going down, the only question being whether it would be an orderly or chaotic process. SAA had plans to take on 260 Sun Air staff and acquire at a discount Sun Air's 62% BEE shareholding.

In late 1998 Sun Air, Nationwide and Comair complained to the Competition Board about what they termed "predatory pricing" by SAA, and the dumping of capacity in the market. Sun Air subsequently withdrew its complaint because, records Andrews at the board meeting; "They wanted to engage us in discussions about some sort of commercial relationship and we indicated we weren't prepared to hold discussions while they were clubbing us over the head on what we think is a specious complaint."

Andrews then discussed a meeting



SAA's Andre Viljoen

that was held with Comair to limit adding capacity on domestic routes. "The effect of that is going to be to make sure there are sort of rational additions to seat capacity as they are needed over time, which would tend to keep prices from further declines," said Andrews, adding that the board was delighted with the approach and Comair had "in principle agreed".

Acquisition by SAA of a controlling interest in Sun Air would allow it to manage the liquidation. Said Andrews: "If it goes into a disorderly liquidation then we have a major threat, because if the whole thing gets handled by a judge and its disposition gets handled by a judge, he may well conclude to sell the entire operation to Virgin or KLM, who are keenly interested in entering this market."

Stopping Virgin or KLM entering the domestic market became a key priority, not least because of the threat of additional competition this could pose on SAA's international routes. So SAA locked Sun Air into an agreement not to talk to other potential white knights, and calculated it could pick up 75% or more of Sun Air's traffic. This, Andrews calculated, would boost earnings by about R125 million a year. SAA was prepared to pay R28 million for Rethabile's 35,75% in Sun Air, Co-ordinated Network International's 19,25% and any other debt or equity interests.

In August 1999, Comair and Nationwide signed on to a plan to support SAA's

acquisition of Sun Air shares, in return for a capacity-sharing arrangement on domestic airline routes. The plan was sanctioned by the Competition Board, which concluded that the South African airline market was too small to sustain four carriers. In a press release issued at the time, the Competition Board invoked "public interest" – the fact that Sun Air's demise was inevitable, leaving passengers, creditors and staff in dire predicaments – as the motive for condoning SAA's acquisition of a majority share in the apparently troubled airline. "The shareholders (SAA) intend to immediately liquidate Sun Air," said the Competition Board, naturally making no reference to the anti-competitive bloodbath that was, according to former Rethabile shareholders, taking place for all to see.

SAA would then proceed with an orderly shutdown of Sun Air, and settle R28 million owed by Rethabile and CNI to their respective banks. But government was also a creditor, to the tune of R20 million. For the plan to work, SAA had to get government to write off the R20 million. In August 1999 Andrews wrote to then transport minister Jeff Radebe informing him of the "rescue proposal" for Sun Air, which was a euphemism for killing it off. SAA and Comair would honour tickets bought by Sun Air passengers and absorb some of their staff.

Andrews painted a grisly picture of a company facing wipe-out within days. Sun Air had creditors claims of more than R70 million and cash and debtors of just R25 million, with "cash evaporating at a rapid rate".

"SAA will continue to monetise the remaining assets and negotiate settlement with the other creditors in a thorough, professional manner," wrote Andrews to the Minister.

The collapse of Sun Air, only days away, would leave thousands of passengers stranded, employees unpaid and shareholders wiped out.

Discussions had taken place with Sun Air shareholders to sound them out on the possibility of SAA acquiring their shares, with the sanction of the Competition Board, to effect a rescue of the airline. Once shareholders relinquished control of Sun Air to SAA, it should have been obvious it would be snuffed out with stunning efficiency. Which is exactly what happened. ■

Red tape strangles adoption hopes

Needy babies trapped in bureaucratic nightmare. **By Kerrin Wilkinson**

THE FIRST INSTALMENT (“BLACK LIKE me,” *nose191*) relating my experiences as a white South African who has adopted black kids, noted my encounters with American transrace-adoptive parents via a Facebook group. I discovered there the extent to which South Africans and north Americans truly do live in different worlds. So let’s look at some South African realities of the situation.

The last census predicted that the number of orphans and vulnerable children in this country would increase from 3.37 million to 5.5 million by 2015 (see “Child alone”, *nose184*). Adoption isn’t keeping up – in fact we’re looking at a sharp decline in adoption over the past few years. Some 14,803 adoptions were registered between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2010 – roughly 2,400 per year. However, the 2004 figure was 2,840; by 2013 it had dropped to 1,699.

Blame for the decline has been laid at various doors, lack of financial aid to adoptive parents being one. Let it be noted though, that while adoption is not a cultural norm nor frequent among black communities, orphaned or unwanted children are very often absorbed into the larger family, for which the family receives a foster grant.

The other main factor blamed for the decline is the 2005 Child Act. In theory the Act is logical, reasonable and comprehensible to the layperson, and begs no questions on the “best interest of the child”. However, the implementation of regulations governing the Act distort the statutory edict to such a degree that the right hand is oft not at-

tached to the same body as the left. The Act was ratified in 2005 and by 2010 the structures, procedures and systems to accommodate it had to be in place. They weren’t. The 1 April 2010 deadline was not met, resulting in an appreciable decline in the adoption rate, setting off alarm bells.

Sue Krawitz, chairperson of the National Adoption Coalition, notes among other factors influencing the situation, that while social workers could once facilitate adoption, the Act requires them to gain accreditation, hugely slashing the number of qualified people. Furthermore, the accreditation process has been slow, and more than three years on the RACAP – the Register on Adoptable Children and Prospective Adoptive Parents – is still functioning in a I’ll-get-to-it-when-I-get-to-it manner.

Let’s recall here that among the reasons for introducing the Act was, apparently, government acceptance of the idea that whites were attempting to “steal” black children. Somehow, transracial adoption was looking sinister, as if it were the latest tactic to restore colonisation. The Act has certainly complicated the process, even if, arguably, it has positively clarified procedures

A brief look at the Act reveals the definition of an “adoptable” child and describes at length who qualifies as a prospective adoptive parent. It discusses who must consent to the adoption and under what circumstances consent is waived. Certain steps must be followed for the child to become available for adoption, some legal and others social. Thereafter, notice must be served





Kerrin Wilkinson with Luke and Bella

on those whose consent is required.

Then there's the RACAP, which appears logical enough, even sensible: the director-general keeps and maintains the Register for the purpose of holding a record of adoptable children and of fit and proper adoptive parents. The registration of an adoptive parent is valid for three years and may be renewed, or ceases, under certain circumstances. The director-general and officials at the Department of Social Development, provincial heads of social development (or their nominees) and accredited child protection organisations have access to the register.

Then there are the regulations, made by the minister, in consultation with the minister for Justice and Constitutional Development, detailing the relevant procedures, for example for determining whether a child has been abandoned, for locating those whose consent is necessary, or for deciding on payment for adoption services.

Now what does all this mean to a childless couple? Basically a long run-around, from start to finish, beginning with actually locating an adoption agency. Since social workers employed at orphanages, children's homes and places of safety no longer facilitate adoptions, they now defer to accredited organisations or social workers. There's the Internet and good luck with that, if you're not sure where to go.

The screening process for couples is standardised, though some organisations and agencies go beyond its rigorous in-depth procedures, adding their own compliancy rules, restrictions and limitations. Some of these come of a lack of confidence in the capabilities of their colleagues. ABBA, for example, won't accept a report recommending a couple from any social worker outside their organisation. They also place an upper-age limit (not prescribed by the department) on prospective trans-race adoptive parents.

The screening process assesses three things: that the adoptive couple is psychologically and medically healthy; they have a relationship which can handle the demands and challenges of child-raising; and their financial position provides the means to raise a child. To establish these features the couple are interviewed, separately and together, on family histories, personal traumas, physical characteristics and

Some organisations place an upper-age limit on prospective trans-race adoptive parents

so on. Each then completes a lengthy questionnaire compiled by the Family Life Centre. These are assessed by the Centre and feedback is provided by a social worker, with issues arising then addressed in further interviews. An independent psychological evaluation is also required, and a full medical report, including chest X-rays. A group session with other prospective adoptive couples is held and couples must provide biographical profiles, complete with photos and short descriptions of themselves, their families, friends, home and suchlike, for perusal by birth parents (let's keep the word "shop" in mind).

Documentation demanded includes police clearance certificates, official clearance that your name does not appear on the Child Protection Register, character references, confidentiality agreements and indemnities, and a financial report with accompanying bank statements and salary slips.

Exhaustive, expensive, yet thorough. Reports are written, documents are submitted and the couple is placed on the RACAP. Then you wait, and wait:

... they're still in the 60-day period

... still looking for the birth father

... nothing has happened as the case worker has 500 files on her desk.

"We've got lots of babies." You hear this all the time, but whether or not

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**Private agency
adoption can
tally up between
R20,000-R30,000.**

**This borders
on elitism**

they are available for adoption is another story. According to the Act, an “adoptable child” is: an orphan without guardian or caregiver willing to adopt them; one where the whereabouts of a child’s parent or guardian can’t be established; where the child has been abandoned; where the parents or guardian have abused or deliberately neglected the child, or allowed the child to be abused or neglected; or where the child is in need of a permanent alternative to present circumstances.

A child may be adopted if consent has been given by: each parent (whether married or not); by under-age parents if assisted by a guardian; by any other person who holds guardianship over the child; by a parent who wishes the child to be adopted by a particular person (who must be deemed eligible by a children’s court); by a parent who has received counselling by an adoption social worker, prior to consenting.

“I don’t have any babies at the moment.” If the couple has been properly prepared some of this will make sense, if not, most could be totally baffling, given the growing number of orphans. Of further concern is the word “I”. Agencies and private social workers prefer to match a birth mother’s babies with adoptive, screened parents also on their lists. So yes, there are babies, but

access is neither simple nor what one might expect in current circumstances.

I am proudly South African. I am a proud mother of two beautiful children. I am not blind to the challenges of my country. I know my children may well be called “Coconuts” at school, as their best friends may well be called “Dutchmen”. I choose to live in the present, enjoying each day my kids are spiritually and emotionally free. I choose not to spend years waiting for someone to call my child a spiteful name. Good parenting, lots of love, and knowing where prejudices come from, will see us through. What won’t is the National Adoption Coalition’s “Adoption as an Option” slogan. Sure – for whom? Working through a private agency an adoption can tally up to between R20,000 and R30,000. This borders on elitism, excluding many families without ready money of that kind, who would happily provide healthy, loving homes for children in need of just that.

Finally, there’s the no choice option: no meeting, no looking at each other, no holding the little one to see if there’s a connection to endure the trials and adventures of 18 years. The Department of Social Welfare doesn’t like what it calls “shopping around”. It’s not legislated that you may not meet the child before making a lifetime commitment, but they don’t like such meetings. There are two large agencies that could challenge this naysaying, or ignore it, but instead give their adoptive parents one photograph of one child (they have chosen) and you have one chance. In whose best interests is this? The child’s? The adoptive parents’? But it does make the welfare figures look good; how many couples, after rigorous screening, and desperate to start a family, will turn down that child in that single photo?

We did: three photos, three children – a boy and two girls. You make the decision on gut instinct, with nothing else to go on. No touch, no burrowing your nose into that chubby neck and taking a lungful, no listening to a gurgle or a laugh; you rely on sixth sense. We were shunned – how dare we turn down a baby? Our social worker looked farther afield, eventually to Cape Town, and thankfully the photo sent through screamed “Yes”.

In this complex reality, is adoption truly the option it’s proclaimed to be? (see Letters) ■



Post-mortem for Post Office?

Let the private sector get on with it. By Cameron Mackenzie MP

IMAGINE SAA HAD A LEGISLATED monopoly on flights between Johannesburg and Cape Town, but suddenly had neither aircraft nor fuel to fly between the two cities. The public outcry would be deafening. The media would get hysterical. As the economy ground to a halt, aviation authorities and government would take action.

So why is it that, when the SA Post Office – as essential to the economy as any transport link – doesn't collect or deliver mail, nothing is done?

It is almost a year since the strike that brought the Post Office to its knees ended with the forced resignation of its Board of Directors in November 2014. An administrator, Dr Simo Lushaba, was appointed and tasked with turning its fortunes around. So where is this essential service today?

The Post Office Act (1998 and amended in 2011) unequivocally states that the Post Office “shall have as its main object and main business to conduct the postal services”, and the Post Office shall not cease or alter its main object or main business unless approved by

the Minister after consultation with the Minister of Finance. In other words the Post Office is legally bound to render its service until decided otherwise by government.

The Post Office was granted a 25-year monopoly on parcels below one kilogram and small mail items. In exchange the corporation is obliged to meet a Universal Service Obligation (USO) requiring it to provide a presence in urban and under-served, mainly rural areas, and to continually improve its service levels.

Yet today, the Post Office can't even meet the most basic terms of its licence – collecting and delivering mail. Over 40 retail post offices have been closed, or rendered unusable as landlords evict or lock them for non-payment of rent, or disconnect electricity. Post offices across the country from Colesberg and Hopetown to Virginia and Burgersdorp have refused to accept mail as they are unable to guarantee a service, because their hired delivery vehicles have been repossessed or fuel cards stopped by creditors owed hundreds of millions of rands. Even SAA – hardly a



Cameron Mackenzie

shining example of a well-run state-owned enterprise itself – has stopped carrying the Post Office's international mail shipments.

Jobs are at risk as local communities are dependent on these centres to provide a critical link for commerce and communication. Many small businesses dependent on postal services have been brought to their knees. More than 25,000 municipal accounts, for example, are waiting to be posted at the Cradock post office, which has severe implications for the cash flow of municipalities already under pressure to collect revenue.

I have recently taken up the cause of graphic artist Paul Treleven who the

Post Office last year commissioned to design a commemorative stamp and cover for the World Conference on flight routes, held in Durban last month. He delivered his designs and his invoice for R6322 to the Post Office last November, and has sent an account statement every month since. But as this issue of *Noseweek* went to press he had still not been paid.

In explaining the failure of ICASA to hold the Post Office to account for breaching the terms of their licence, ICASA councillors revealed that no mechanism exists to measure the corporation's performance. Thus, no action can be taken, which explains why the complaint lodged by a group of specialist publishers is not being resolved.

At a recent meeting of Parliament's Telecommunications and Postal Services portfolio committee, an ICASA councillor stated that action will be taken against several municipalities in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, which have taken matters into their own hands and arranged deliveries of accounts to ratepayers, as they have allegedly "violated the Post Office's monopoly"! It's a case of the guilty walking free while the innocent are made to suffer.

In the meanwhile the man appointed as administrator and charged with the Post Office's return to profitability as a "customer-centric" organisation has

been rewarded for its collapse with appointment as chairman of a new board.

And what does this new board mean for the corporation? Given the critical state of the Post Office, it is shocking that there are no appointees to provide the in-depth experience necessary to turning the corporation into a profitable, efficient and reliable carrier of postal goods.

While the new directors bring financial and IT expertise as well as governance experience, there is little indication of the necessary experience in logistics, retail, e-commerce or other operations that lie at the heart of the Post Office's main business.

The only profitable entity on the Post Office's balance sheet is the Postbank, but with government's stated aim of turning that into a full-scale retail bank, it's clear the focus of the board lies here. Without Postbank the Post Office would be hopelessly insolvent and drowning in debt. It is losing more than R100 million a month as mail volumes decline rapidly – in no small measure through failure to provide a reliable and effective service.

The latest Board appointments are a clear indicator that government is not serious about the Post Office meeting its core mandate to deliver mail. It's time to end the monopoly and allow consumers to choose a postal service that does deliver, by allowing private

sector companies the opportunity to compete in the market. If the SA Post Office can't deliver, let others do it.

Cameron Mackenzie is DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services.

The new board members

Dr Simosezwe Dugmore Lushaba, chairperson – former Rand Water CEO who has served as the Administrator since November 2014 after the last board was forced to resign;

Zibuse Comfort Ngidi – an attorney who publicly and vociferously defended Zuma over Nkandla (his reward maybe?)

Bulelwa Patricia Soci, deputy chair – a chartered accountant (SA) with extensive financial services experience;

Nomahlubi Victoria Simamane – CEO of Zanusi Brand Solutions (to repair the SAPO brand?);

Mduduzi Eric Zakwe – CA (SA), IT specialist (with an eye on the Postbank, systems and processes? Goodbye Mr Postman?)

Robert Nkuna – professional advisor to Ministers (Transport and Communications), Former ICASA Councillor and MDDA Director; Dep Director GCIS;

Dr Lynette Molefi – Medical Doctor, COO of Safika Health (perhaps went to medical school with Dr Siyabonga Cwele?);

Marion Marole – MBA, professional director including African Bank (again suggesting survival strategies revolve around Postbank rather than a postal service?);

Joel Sihle Ngubane – former SA Post Office director and IT specialist (absolutely no idea why....);

Phetole 'Elvis' Rabohale – ten years mail processing experience at the Post Office, till 2004; HR Executive.



GREATER CAPE TOWN 101.3 | ATLANTIC SEABOARD 97.1
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Digging into South Deep

From page 11

chopped and changed direction, resulting in organisational confusion. However, competent mining engineers, familiar with the South Deep ore body, say the most disastrous management has unquestionably been under Gold Fields.

The Gold Fields corporate office is seen as being run by non-technical/managerial people (such as accountants, lawyers, and HR specialists) who think mining is a paper exercise. Thus, Willie Jacobsz, who holds a Bachelor of Arts and ranks as Gold Fields's most senior internal spinmeister, was remunerated to the tune of R10 million for 2014.

Non-executive director of Gold Fields, Cheryl Carolus, also holds a BA and has no exposure to mining in her qualifications, training or experience. Holland is an accountant. Other BAs and accountants on the Gold Fields board of directors include David Murray, Gayle Wilson, Donald Ncube, and Paul Schmidt.

Remuneration of these "nice" people has moved in an apparent inverse exponential curve to South Deep's performance. Among all the dross concocted by Gold Fields under Holland, perhaps the most serious issue goes to the declaration of resources and reserves. On this score, regulators around the world have over the decades strenuously tightened the rules, to prevent outright frauds.

The most recent of size, and likely the biggest in history, began out in 1995 under the guise of Canada-listed Bre-X. The stock price increased within years to levels where Bre-X had a market capitalisation running into the stratosphere: more than C\$6 billion. When the fat lady sang, it turned out that projections of Bre-X's resource base alongside the Busang River in Indonesia were an elaborate fraud.

In the contemporary era, one of the key rules – normally strictly enforced – of the reserve-disclosure game requires that technical and economic

factors be applied to the resource base to calculate declared reserves. Resources are the most widely-defined mineralised content of an ore body; at South Deep such resources are put, as mentioned, at 76 million ounces.

On the other hand, the assessed, accessible reserve, is put at 38 million ounces, while the actual measured reserve at South Deep is put at 13.5 million ounces. These are the numbers that investors rely on; numbers, investors are reassured, that comply with very stringent and time-tested rules.

The thing is – proving there's platinum on the moon doesn't mean it can be recovered easily, or at a profit. At South Deep, in the absence of a proven method for wide-reef mining, it is incomprehensible, and possibly dishonest, that Gold Fields has declared such substantial reserves for wide-reef mining.

This is a serious accusation, but it is time to put it on the table. The mining methods being used at South Deep have all the appearance of research and development exercises, which is quite possibly why none have worked. Gold Fields paid US\$3 billion for South Deep and has since spent circa US\$1 billion (excluding sky-high remuneration hikes) trying to get it to work.

One mining engineer puts it thus: "I don't think anyone else in the world is trying to mine these widths at this depth. The reason Gold Fields is chasing wide reefs is to boost its declaration of resource/reserve ounces."

Are there solutions? Since 2008, South Deep has been committed to mechanised wide-reef mining. Mechanisation translates into dilution (more

rock mixed with less gold), which reduces grade. Recent mining rates from South Deep indicate a dilution of more than 30%. In addition, a serious hazard in mining wide reefs at depth is rock (pressure) bursts. In order to limit these in wide-reef mining, the majority of the reef must be "sterilised" (excluded from mining) as support pillars.

And so to a possible – and honest – solution. "A far better strategy," says the mining engineer, "would be to mine conventionally on the high-grade horizontal bands in each multi-reef package. This would probably result in a smaller resource/reserve base."

The "problem" for Gold Fields is that this simply does not suit the historical investor relations spin of the paper miners. In stock market reality, which is partly based on sophistry and illusion, investors have long been seduced by high resource and reserve numbers for gold miners.

That said, it is investor confidence in management that arguably influences valuation more than anything else. Since Holland took the CEO's seat at Gold Fields, the NYSE stock price has underperformed markedly. Today, Gold Fields ranks as one of the poorest-performing big gold stocks in the world. Stock exchanges have little appetite for hard work when it comes to examining dodgy stocks, but it is time, surely, for Gold Fields's investor base to demand the truth about South Deep.

Gold Fields evidently rushed into buying South Deep without doing real homework. In a filing dated 7 December 2007, Gold Fields told the SEC in Washington that "prior to acquiring South Deep . . . Gold Fields was able to conduct only limited due diligence". No reasons were given.

South Deep's apparently insurmountable technical and economic challenges are one thing. Then there's the Kebble factor. On 14 March 2006, JLCO, forensic investigators at Randgold & Exploration, completed a series of reports that showed, inter alia, that Brett Kebble had funnelled R522 million in stolen cash into Western Areas, to the benefit of South Deep. This reality, not unlike the evidently unmineable South Deep ore body, seems to have escaped the mandarins at Gold Fields. It's time for the fat lady to sing. ■

**Gold Fields
evidently rushed
into buying South
Deep without doing
real homework**

The End of Days or a lot of papal bull?

Read all about the Alien Agenda

HE MAY OR MAY NOT BE THE Antichrist, but the Pope will almost certainly be the one to reveal the existence of alien life, embrace and pray for it, baptise it and herald Extra Terrestrials as mankind's creators and saviours. And it could well happen in the next 12 months.

Welcome to the Christian Fringe, a band of authors, bloggers, podcasters and YouTubers, who join Christian prophecy to mainstream conspiracy theory to prove we are nearing the End of Days, in which demons disguised as aliens will rule the world.

Using the Bible, extra-biblical sources and mainstream news analysis, those on the Fringe are also known to call out Christian churches for their lack of prophetic teaching and bastardising of biblical truths.

To the Fringe, many mainstream churches – particularly those falling into the “mega” fold – have white-washed the Bible's teachings on judgment, hell and Jesus-as-saviour, to avoid offending the politically correct.

The blurring of secular conspiracy and the Fringe's interpretation of biblical prophecy has led to an increase in the Internet orgy of predictophiles from religious and secular sources.

They foretold that September would be the start of the Christian pre-tribulation period. This, the Fringe says, will start with a worldwide financial implosion, and calls for a global political and spiritual saviour, who will come in the form of an ET.

Talk of a spectacular global financial collapse has been doing the rounds since the 2008 crash – and long before; nothing new here.

But, the Fringe says, it is the impending financial catastrophe, plus Sir Isaac Newton's prophetic writings, plus an increase in biblical signs (*Matthew 24*),

By Desiree Erasmus

plus celestial phenomena such as Blood Moons and the Jewish year of Jubilee, plus calls to embrace potential alien existence that may make the last months of 2015 and onwards a pit of human misery.

Fringe and mainstream conspirators are issuing the same warning: Prepare yourselves, because something is coming, and it started in September.

Traditionally, Christian conspiratorialists and some fundamentalists (usually a term used for those who take the bible literally) hold that the Pope and Catholic Church are forces of evil that will play a massive role in the end times, with Jesuits leading the charge. The Fringe takes it further.

Often with a PhD in physics, microbiology, genetics, Semitic languages, Apologetics or economics, individuals on the Fringe have in common a hunger for eschatology.

They are devourers of science, science fiction and global conspiracies; they know Crowley, Blake, Asimov and Lovecraft, and have transferred secular occult fascination to their Christian lives. Their Bible knowledge is astounding, as is their understanding of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek; they are often adherents of the King James Version because of its textually pure translation.

But, as stated earlier, the Fringe also utilises extra-biblical and mainstream conspiratorial sources.

They put hours of study into verses such as *Genesis 6:1-4*, which, they say, when read with the *Book of Enoch*, provides sound theory about the proliferation of human evil and the “alien agenda”. (Even though they cite it often, the Fringe is quick to point out that the *Book of Enoch* is Apocrypha and should not be viewed as authentic inspired text.)



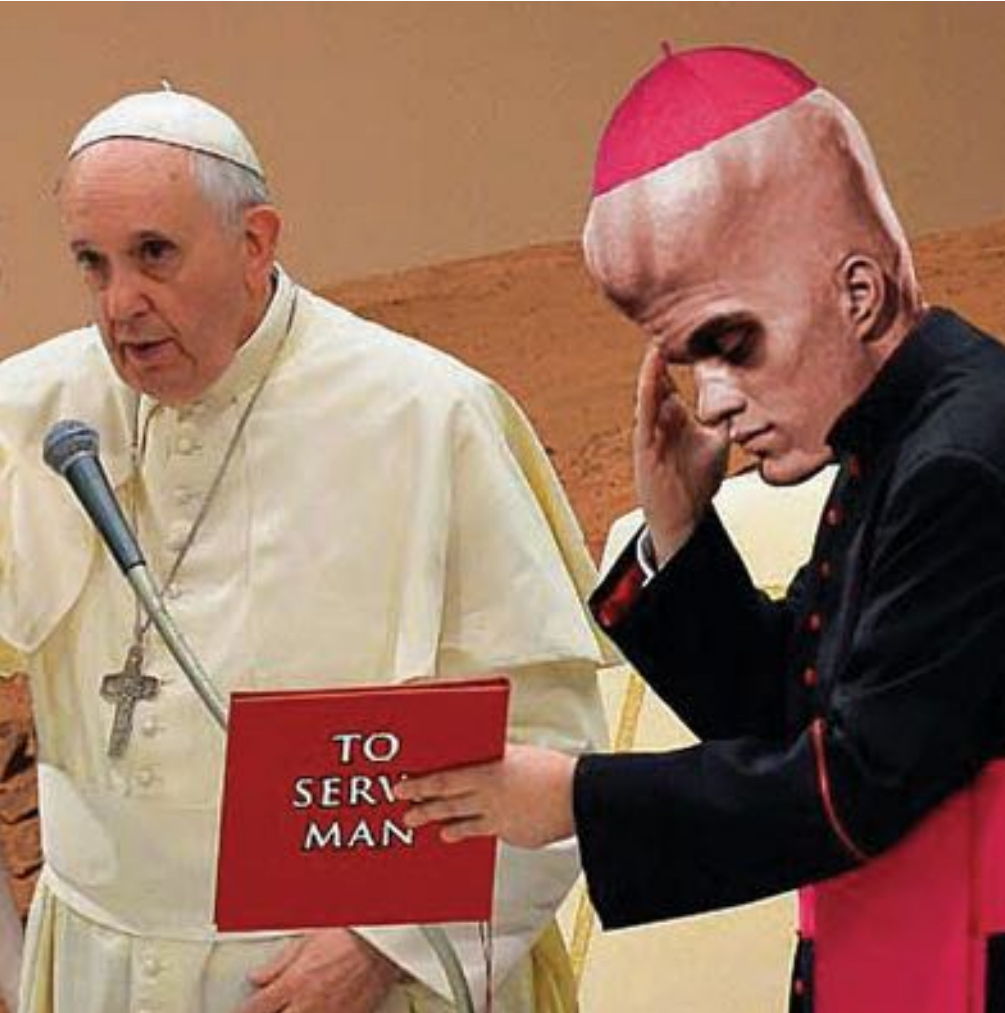
Genesis 6:1-4 has long been viewed as odd and best left alone in mainstream religious circles, but the Fringe takes it on with conspiratorial ease.

Some on the Fringe postulate that the reason the “fallen ones” copulated with human women (the Nephilim are widely regarded as their offspring) was to infect the human gene pool with demonic DNA. This was an attempt to hinder the birth and return of the Christ by upsetting Jesus's bloodline. They theorise that the biblical Flood cited in many religions was necessary to destroy Nephilim DNA.

The Fallen Ones, Nephilim and aliens are really demons in different guises, according to the Fringe – a view shared by a surprising number in mainstream churches.

The “alien agenda” then, is simply another way that demons will mislead mankind into one day serving a false alien Christ. This alien saviour will be embraced and marketed as a benign and loving god by the Vatican (the Pope will be his wingman) and, eventually, most populations.

This, in turn, will culminate in one world religion, one currency, government and so on, which brings us right back to the granddaddy of conspira-



cies, the New World Order, now usually branded as the “New Order” by politicians and globalists, undoubtedly to throw David Icke off their reptilian scent.

Like secular UFO-logists or those pushing for ET disclosure (think lawyer Daniel Sheehan or former Obama advisor John Podesta), the Fringe expects full disclosure to come within the near future, perhaps in the next 12 to 24 months, although, as with secular conspiraphiles, the timeline usually has a reputation-saving disclaimer.

Fringe sources for the postulations are varied. With the Catholic-Church-is-the-harlot-in-scarlet as foundation, an innocent or just plain stupid statement, if made by someone on the conspiratorial radar, leads to the pricking of ears and furious blogging and podcasting.

An example of this was seen in May this year, when (Jesuit!) Pope Francis, quoted by Vatican Radio and reported in *The Independent*, *Time* and *The Guardian*, asked: “If, for example, tomorrow an expedition of Martians came to us here and one said ‘I want to be baptised!’, what would happen?”

“When the Lord shows us the way, who are we to say ‘No, Lord, it is not

prudent. No, let’s do it this way’. Who are we to close doors?” said Francis.

Talk of alien life and its implications is not new to mainstream Christianity or other religions. What leaves the Fringe and some mainstream believers uneasy about the Vatican stance is that it appears to view alien life as a potential source of hope and inspiration instead of a demonic threat.

And then there’s the Vatican Observatory and the LBT Near Infrared Spectroscopic Utility with Camera and Integral Field Unit for Extragalactic Research (LUCIFER) in Arizona.

LUCIFER is touted as belonging to the Vatican Observatory by conspiraphiles, but it is the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics that built and operates it. Both organisations, and others, are part of the consortium of the Mount Graham International Observatory. This falls on deaf ears when a quick Google search will tell conspiraphiles that Brother Guy Consolmagno, a Jesuit (!) and MIT-educated research astronomer, planetary scientist and president of the Vatican Observatory Foundation, is on record as saying he would baptise an alien.

Interestingly, LUCIFER has been renamed LUCI, and although reasons for

this could not be found, one would assume it’s because the Planck Institute’s physicists finally discovered a correlation between the devil and poor PR.

As for Mount Graham itself, in their book *On the Path of the Immortals* and in various interviews available online, Fringe authors Tom Horn and Cris Putnam tell us Indian Americans in the area have long believed it is an inter-dimensional portal through which “Star People” move.

The possibility of portals is manna in Fringe circles, with happenings at CERN’s Large Hadron Collider (which gave us the Higgs Boson) furiously monitored. The Collider is considered to be an attempt to open portals into new dimensions, through which our alien saviours will arrive. Or it will create a black hole that will suck the planet in and we will all die.

According to *New Scientist*, when the Large Hadron Collider’s experiments resume next year, “It should be able to gather physics data at energies of 13 teraelectronvolts, the highest-energy collisions of particle beams ever.”

It’s as exciting as it is scary, but at least the Large Hadron Collider has given us another reference for Switzerland besides overpriced chocolate and Heidi.

Adding cause for protracted conspiratorial salivation is the statue of Hindu deity Shiva doing a Nataraja dance, which is perched at CERN’s headquarters. Apparently Shiva does the Nataraja when he is going to destroy a universe. The statue has been a permanent fixture at CERN since 2004 and was a gift from India, with which CERN has had a long collaboration, according to the *CERN Courier*.

Verily, the conspiratorial and prophetic world of the Fringe is vast, intricate and thoroughly fascinating. Authors like Putnam and Horn put hours of secular and biblical research into their work and their writing is engaging. Their theories are also convincing for those who want to be convinced – those who have fallen out of love with the alleged wishy-washiness of the current Christian milieu.

Alien greys, inter-dimensional portals and nefarious Popes aside, come the day, Google, YouTube, Wikipedia, the Max Planck Institute and “wishy-washy” Christians will have a lot to account for. ■



The spy who came into the freeze

Former friends find it hard to forgive Olivia Forsyth's betrayal. By Donwald Pressly

BRIDGET HILTON-BARBER WAS ONE of Olivia Forsyth's best friends on Rhodes University campus in the early 1980s. "Bridgy" as Olivia called her, now dismisses the woman who betrayed the student left – and scores of black activists – and the book she has written, in a single phrase: "A sad reflection on the futility of her life."

Controversy still dogs Forsyth, 30 years after she was exposed as a wannabe double agent, offering to spy for the ANC on her original masters, the notorious security branch. It turned out the ANC did not believe her and threw her in detention barracks in their Quatro camp in Angola.

When a public-relations company representing the publishers of her book, Jonathan Ball, approached the Cape Town Press Club to host Forsyth, one of its leading members, Lorna Levy, protested to the author of this story – who is also secretary general

of the club – that it was inappropriate for the club to provide a platform for her. When it was suggested that Forsyth should be put on the spot, Levy retorted: "Behind bars would be my spot. How many people did she put behind bars, whose only offence was their opposition to apartheid?"

Indeed, it was a difficult decision to provide a platform for Forsyth, but one or two of her former friends did turn up at the function. One was Kristine Melville. Commenting on Facebook afterwards, Melville said: "Her story about why she took so long to come out and write a book and say sorry... with hand on heart, and excuses for not going to the TRC or going to ask for amnesty just don't add up at all." Melville went to Forsyth during the function "with my heart beating blood and knives... I could hardly speak. All she said to me was: 'Thanks for being here'."

Melville continued: "I gave my most

cold look – hard for me as I'm just not that kind of person. And then she asked if I'd been convinced by her story. Well it was hard to answer without throwing out rotten tomatoes and maybe guns, and I said ... hmm, not so sure, I need to think about all you've said... while she smiled."

Forsyth, author of *Agent 407 – A South African Spy Breaks Her Silence*, was asked if she had known beforehand that the Cradock Four would be killed. She was also the first person on the scene of the firebombing of a Grahamstown Youth Congress activist's house in Rini township. She ferried his dying girlfriend, Miseka, to hospital. Did she know about these incidents in advance? Forsyth said that, as a security branch agent on Rhodes University campus, the branch worked on a "need-to-know" basis. She had been told of the burning of Chris Mbekela's house by another activist, Priscilla Hall. Forsyth rushed to the scene and

took Miseska to the hospital, where she later died. A quote from the book: “Of all the images I have of the apartheid era, this is for me the most terrible and iconic: a young girl burned and suffering the most agonising death, her only sin that she was black.”

In the book she recalls an occasion when Terror Lekota – now Cope leader but then a leading UDF activist – had spoken at Rhodes and stayed over at her flat, the “Fruit Basket”. “I reported the details of our meeting and his departure as soon as I could, which happened to be just too late for them [the security branch] to organise anyone to waylay him en route. How easily he might have suffered the same fate as Matthew Goniwe, Sparrow Mkhonto, Fort Calata and Sicelo Mhlauli, the Cradock Four, who were ambushed and murdered by security police in June 1985. I’d like to think that, at the least, such small deceptions prevented some criminal acts.”

This seemed to be the stock answer. She writes that she will never know what led to the detention of her friends – such as Bridget Hilton-Barber, detained for three months and Sue Lund, detained for a year. She could not be sure her reports had led to their arrests, she says in the tone of contrived naivety maintained throughout the book.

So Forsyth reports that “the biggest protest meeting I ever attended was the funeral of the Cradock Four. One of the ways the security forces dealt with the leaders of the struggle was simply to make them vanish. There were a number of incidents of people disappearing, of being ambushed in the Eastern Cape, including the Pebco Three, who vanished, presumed murdered, in May 1985, and while no-one ever said it to me directly, it was clear that their deaths were the work of the security branch.”

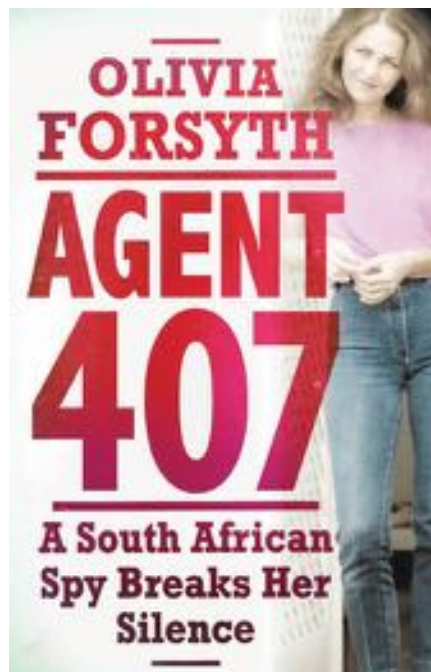
Forsyth writes that the funeral of the Cradock Four, on Saturday 20 July, was “one of the most memorable occasions of my life, even though I knew that I was there to some extent under false pretences. I also felt deeply moved and bizarrely honoured to be present, witnessing history”.

Forsyth told the press club that she had apologised to Bridgy. Bridget Hilton-Barber confirms this: “I accepted ambivalently... I am not sure what to

make of it.” Hilton-Barber says if Forsyth had come clean she would have found it easier to forgive her for betraying her friends and the struggle. Forsyth had managed to infiltrate a host of left organisations, including Nusas – of which she became Rhodes campus co-chair.

Bridget remembers Forsyth chairing an “outing” of spies – including Deputy SRC president Daryl McLean. “Olivia got up in the Great Hall and said... I beg of you spies to come clean.

“If only she had done it herself,” says



Bridget “It would have made a huge impact. It must have been extraordinarily difficult to be part of the security police for anyone with a conscience and a heart... talk about cognitive dissonance: you make friends with all of those people and then put them away... that is the part that fascinates me.” In particular she should have come clean to Chris Mbekele. “I just can’t unpack that.”

Peter auf der Heyde objected to the *Sunday Times*, the press club and Radio 702 for providing a platform to Forsyth to publicise something “which, no doubt, is an attempt on her part to justify what she did.

“I think it must be terrible to have to look back on one’s life and realise you have done something that is so hor-

ribly wrong and has caused so much heartache, violence and destruction.

“Even Gordon Brookbanks [another spy] keeps his mouth shut, lives his life and lies low... [former police minister] Adriaan Vlok is going around trying to make amends, while others try to rationalise it... Olivia is the latter.”

Alison Love, a former friend who now lives in the United States, says of Forsyth’s betrayal: “There is a personal psychological affect that her behaviour and her activities had on all of us... it will be with us for life... we are talking about 30 years later.

“She had a way of bonding one-on-one... confiding in you... like wow you were special, telling you stuff she could share with you.” On the day that McLean was outed, Olivia showed Love clothing from her previous life, a sari and “biker chick” leathers. She remembered how Olivia always took notes at meetings. “We thought she was just diligent.”

Karen Thorne, also a contemporary at Rhodes, said she forced herself to read the book. “It reads like an EL James novel. I would love to see her on a witness stand under cross-examination.” According to Thorne the nub of the story is that Forsyth did not decide “of her own volition to come clean and tell her story” – she was approached by Bridget Hilton-Barber, who asked her for an interview for something she was working on. “That was when Olivia decided to pip her to the post and tell her own white-washed version of history.” Thorne is blunt: “I may have found it in myself to feel sorry for her, even to forgive her.. if she had come clean and told the truth. But she didn’t. She lied to us then and she lied to us now, rubbing salt in old wounds. No truth, no reconciliation. Fuck you Olivia Forsyth. Go home. Wherever that is.”

Forsyth claims to have escaped from Quatro camp in Angola after failing to convince the ANC and MK that she would make the perfect double agent. She now lives in Tuscany, Italy. She says of the book: “These pages are not sufficiently polished and now they never will be... I have to go now. My dearly beloved [husband] did not get the five-year all-clear and this time the cancer is inoperable. It is time to get busy living, to keep laughing, to go on adventures together. There are things to do, grand plans, as ever.” ■



ANC's Blade Nzimande

Goal oriented. Beware ANC Premier League

THE ELECTION OF A RELATIVELY unknown North-West provincial leader of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) as its national president has again highlighted the growing influence of an ANC lobby group known as the “Premier League”. This group, which also saw its candidate, Bathabile Dlamini, elected as president of the ANC Women’s League last month, is consolidating its influence in the governing party before the 2017 elective conference.

ANCYL member of the Executive Council for Local Government and Human Settlements, Collen Maine, was chosen to head the Youth League when close to 3,000 ANCYL delegates met in Midrand on 4-6 September. The League’s National Executive Committee was disbanded in 2013 after its then president, Julius Malema, was expelled for challenging President Jacob Zuma. The ANC leadership replaced the NEC with handpicked interim leaders, dubbed the “National Task Team”. Maine won the ANCYL presidency with the backing of the Premier League, which is led by three powerful

ANC provincial leaders: Mpumalanga premier David Mabuza, North-West premier Supra Mahumapelo and Free State premier Ace Magashule. With their strong provincial party base, deep pockets and the support of the ANC KwaZulu-Natal secretary, Sihle Zikalala, the lobby group saw their preferred candidates elected. Mahumapelo jumped on stage and couldn’t contain his joy, minutes after Maine’s victory was announced. Zikalala’s man, Njabulo Nzuza, was elected ANCYL secretary-general, seen as the most strategic position, with responsibility for the day-to-day running of the League, while Mabuza’s ally Desmond Moela was elected as Maine’s deputy.

“It is not true that comrades are imposed, they emerged from the democratic processes of the organisation... we must debunk that notion,” said Fikile Mbalula, former ANCYL president and current minister of Sports and Recreation. Another former Youth League president, Home Affairs minister Malusi Gigaba, told *City Press*: “The 2017 elective conference is still far away; by the time we get to 2017, you might not be a factor, or your peo-

ple might no longer have the influence you had wished they would have.”

Nevertheless, the Premier League is “serious and have the money,” one ANC insider tells *Africa Confidential*: “Nowadays, you need some serious money for an election and they have it; they want influence.” In a thinly-veiled attack on the increase in factional support, the South African Communist Party, led by Blade Nzimande, also weighed in: “Attempts at factional, corrupt and corporate capture of our movement is condemned and the use of money to buy votes, stifle internal democratic processes and isolate the alliance and its partners... appears to be increasing in the run up to 2017.”

Other contenders, such as Ronald Lamola, a former ANCYL deputy president, and former treasurer Pule Mabe, had their hopes shattered when they did not receive the necessary support from branches or delegates at the conference. There were several calls for recounts of Lamola’s nomination, which fell short by two votes, but these were repeatedly turned down. “Lamola is a good guy and would have taken the ANCYL far, but the guy has

no money,” a Youth League insider told us.

Known as “Collen 34.9” due to his uncertain age – official cut-off age for Youth League members is 35 – many former ANCYL members were disappointed that, as some put it, such a “lacklustre and toothless” person had been elected to lead them. His detractors in the North-West also link him to the Congress of the People (Cope), a party formed in 2008 by a group of disgruntled ANC members, and claim he was a member until 2009, which he denies. The former student leader has also been a member of Parliament.

“That one, Maine, has no vision and no real power, he will not take the League anywhere and will follow what the Premier League or Zuma wants him to do – and he’s already so old,” said a former ANCYL member. Apart from the Premier League’s support, Maine also had the backing of the biggest voting bloc, KZN, which had close to 800 voting delegates. The election of the ANCYL’s top executive showed the strong strategic influence

the Premier League wields, with eight members from KZN, five from the Free State and Mpumalanga, and four from North-West Province.

“The future looks bright, we have no challenge at all,” tweeted Julius Malema, now leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters, after Maine’s election. A last-ditch effort by a group of North-West ANCYL members, to stop the conference, failed after the High Court in Pretoria rejected their application for an urgent interdict. They brought the application claiming irregular auditing processes and making allegations of interference from top structures within the ANC.

ANC President Zuma also addressed the conference: “We need an ANC Youth League that is loyal to the ANC and must unite behind the new leadership, and work hard to eliminate factionalism which diverts cadres from building the ANC and the country”. Gauteng delegates who had supported Mabe snubbed Zuma by refusing to attend his speech.

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Miner wobbles

TWO INTERNATIONAL MINING GIANTS are in dire straits – Glencore and Lonmin – and taking parts of the economies of Congo-Kinshasa, South Africa and Zambia with them. Even before the crisis both carried political baggage. Glencore has been run for the past 15 years by South African Ivan Glasenberg, who is remembered by African National Congress (ANC) leaders as a protégé of company-founder Marc Rich, the pioneering commodity trader who broke sanctions to sell to the apartheid regime. Lonmin, once the minerals division of Roland “Tiny” Rowland’s Lonrho, later had Cyril Ramaphosa, current SA Deputy President, on its board, and is now indelibly linked to the 2012 massacre by police at its Marikana mine.

Hit by weak platinum prices, SA-based, United Kingdom-headquartered Lonmin PLC is cutting investment and jobs, drawing more ire from the ANC government. Its shares on the London Stock Exchange are down to a 27-year low.

Glencore’s problems are worse still.

Lambasted by civil activists for its opaque trading deals with corrupt and oppressive regimes, such as General Sani Abacha’s in Nigeria and President Joseph Kabila’s in Congo, five years ago it heralded a new era of transparency with a public listing.

Yet since Glencore’s flotation in 2011, its shares have been the worst performing in the FTSE 100, losing 75% in value. It has cut dividends and its debt is just one notch above junk status. Finance Director Steve Kalmin conceded that investors were now running “doomsday scenarios”. It has sold 25% of its shares in Lonmin and cut back its capital spending to US\$6 billion.

For the last two months, Glencore has been in bitter dispute with the SA government over its plans for further job cuts. It’s also likely to prompt further clashes with the governments in Kinshasa and Lusaka, with plans to suspend for at least 18 months production at Congo’s Katanga mine and Zambia’s Mopani mine, which produce some 400,000 tonnes of copper a year.

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Kitschen sink. Oz excesses

AUSTRALIANS WERE TRANSFIXED LAST month by the staggering kitsch in a “pre-wedding” video of the story of the meeting of Salim Mehajar (his persona a composite of Vin Diesel, Kanye West, Tupac Shakur and Jay Gatsby) and his new wife Aysha on YouTube. Words cannot describe the seven-minute 16-second real life fairytale. The 29-year-old multi-millionaire property developer and deputy mayor of the Sydney suburb of Auburn came to national attention when his \$1.4 million wedding, complete with fighter helicopters, a fleet of Ferraris and 100 motorbikes, closed down a couple of streets and caused traffic chaos. There’s also the actual wedding video, the wedding bloopers video and a Photoshopped mock-up of bride and groom growing old together.

Now to ministerial bloopers. Two stand out: The PM Tony Abbott on radio, comparing the Nazis and Islamic State; “The Nazis did terrible evil but they had sufficient sense of shame to try and hide it. These people [IS] boast about their evil. This is the extraordinary thing.” The Jewish community was not happy.

Then, immigration minister Peter Dutton was chatting to the PM, not realising there was a boom mike above his head. The PM had just returned from talks with Pacific Island leaders in Papua New Guinea, where low-lying islands are under serious threat from rising sea levels as a result of climate change. A meeting was running late, and Mr Dutton said it was running to “Cape York time”, a reference, as one newspaper delicately put it, to a “fluid approach to punctuality” on the part of remote Aboriginal communities in Cape York, where Abbott had recently visited. Abbott replied: “We had a bit of that up in Port Moresby [in PNG]” – to which Dutton said: “Time doesn’t mean anything when you’re about to have water lapping at your door”. Responding more in “sadness” than anger, the Kiribati President, Anote Tong, said Mr Dutton should search his soul. Aboriginal leaders too were unimpressed. But one plus:



Lovey dovey: Salim and Aysha Mehajar at their wedding in Australia

at least a member of the government has acknowledged climate change.

And, oh, the ironies: on to Syria. After the photo of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi appeared, Mr “Stop the boats” Abbott stumped everyone with the announcement that Australia would take 12,000 Syrian refugees this financial year. That was the same day he announced Australian air strikes into Syria. While congratulating Abbott on giving cynicism a rest for a day, *Sydney Morning Herald* commentator Tony Wright was moved to write: “Those of a mind to do so may chafe at the knowledge that Australia is bombing Syria as it takes its 12,000 refugees from Europe, may debate how and why Mr Abbott came to change his mind about the number of refugees Australia will accept, and may recoil from the incongruity of a nation that grants asylum to some while imprisoning others on distant islands...”

Now safe home in Australia, after

400 days in an Egyptian jail, Aljazeera journalist Peter Greste told a TV panel show that he’d been very pleased to discover how resilient he was. He was however, concerned for his two fellow accused, who are still in Egypt awaiting trial. And for the other roughly 220 journalists locked up by governments in the last year (75 percent on terrorism charges or crimes against the state). They were, he said, just doing their jobs. In his case, he had been interviewing the Muslim Brotherhood, which only six months earlier had been in government before being overthrown. They were still one of the largest and most significant political organisations in the country. “ISIS, of course, has taken the heads off three journalists and we saw the attack on the Charlie Hebdo offices in Paris... so what we’re seeing now, I think, is a form of globalised McCarthyism, where journalism itself is under fire in the way that we haven’t seen for a generation.” ■



Wicked tease. Hot page turner

ECSTATIC REVIEW EXCERPTS ADORNING BOOK covers should, of course, be viewed with suspicion. But occasionally they live up to the ballyhoo. Happily, *Disclaimer* is worth the rah-rah.

“The best thriller I’ve read this year,” declares Rosamund Upton, bestselling British author. She’s right. Renée Knight has the rare ability to command and sustain attention because she’s a wicked tease. It’s her first novel and, judging by the highly intelligent whodunit factor, she has found her niche. Her apprenticeship as a BBC documentary-maker probably helped to shape the brisk choreography of her style.

Disclaimer is subtitled “Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental...”. Well, you could have fooled me. The cast is living and breathing, which makes this realistic tale a compulsive read. Like *Rosemary’s Baby* and similar classic bogeyman tales, the trick is to thrust fear and horror into the lives of nice folks. The best of us come up with the occasional fit of paranoia now and then – but sometimes the nightmare comes true.

Disclaimer is a deeply observant study of character under stress. Knight’s range covers what *Zorba the Greek* dubbed “the whole disaster” of family life. Innocent children, belligerent adolescents, feckless yuppies, anxious parents and the complex dance of ageing. All this – and then she tosses in terrifying ingredients: obsession, hatred, regret. Oh, and evil too.

It’s difficult to sketch the plot without giving the game away, but suffice it to say that a sensible, capable woman is shaken out of workaday complacency by a raving stranger who will stop at nothing in his cunning plan to avenge the death of his son. So the lives of a group of Londoners are invaded and desecrated by a controlled madness.

The internet is an enormous aid in inflicting malice and confusion on perceived enemies and their associates. Knight is particularly sharp on the social dislocations created by constant messaging. She describes a bunch of youngsters in a pub, drinks at the ready, a scene from any decade, except they weren’t speaking. They weren’t even looking at each other. “Their eyes were down on their phones,

likes a bunch of old ladies checking their bingo cards.”

An unhappy 26-year-old sits, chatting away with his fingers, telling anyone out there what he thinks, what he’s up to. A deceitful stranger tempts him into a drug den. “A shit-hole of a place, but it’s fine once you shut your eyes. After a while you don’t notice the smell.” And you don’t realise that the seemingly naive youngster seeking your online friendship is actually a crazed old looney.

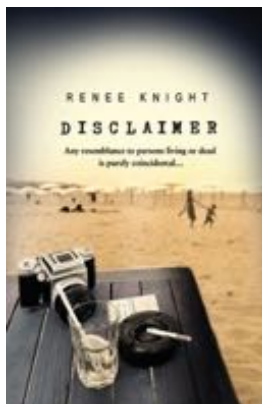
By way of contrast, Knight has a hard-working lawyer, musing aboard an early morning bus, gazing benevolently at a young African nurse going home after night shift. A good woman, he thinks, a woman without vanity, who works to support her family. Then he decides his thoughts are racist; the presumption of simplicity, the imposition of worthiness to her existence is patronising. Ironically, the lawyer is the father of the young dope artist, who drowns his sorrows with random substances in sordid dives.

Psychologists are increasingly vocal these days about the dangers to alienated youth of obsession with electronics.

Disclaimer paints nightmarish outcomes for malleable minds. Yes, it’s a hair-raising tale, but it’s also a hot page-turner. ■

DISCLAIMER

By Renée Knight
(Doubleday)



Renée Knight



Letter from Umjindi

Soap stories. Give Afrikaans a boost

LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE AND CALL this piece "White Termination, American Torment and Black Exploitation". And no, it's not about the current to-do on white police shootings of blacks in the US of A. Eish! I mean African Americans! It's about our so-called public broadcaster the SABC and what it thinks is worthwhile broadcast content. (Please note the observations you are about to read are on the lighter side, though depending on your language group you might feel they're a little more serious.)

Not long back I noticed that with the supposed public broadcaster's influx of "newly home-grown dramas" (as it calls them), Afrikaans programmes have taken a back seat. – exceptions being the long-running *7de Laan* and *Musiek Roulette*. Even Afrikaans language commercials have all but disappeared, though of course that's more the doing of advertisers and their agencies.

I could not help having a good laugh and felt rather proud of myself for making this observation on 'white termination' – of Afrikaans to be more exact – when I caught the tail-end of an interview with an SABC official who was boasting about the broadcaster's home-grown dramas – and conceded there needs to be more Afrikaans-language content, but ruined the admission by adding "you can't make everyone happy".

Ach my poor Vermaak, Bothas and Van der Merwes, from universities to the supposed public broadcaster your language is taking a hit.

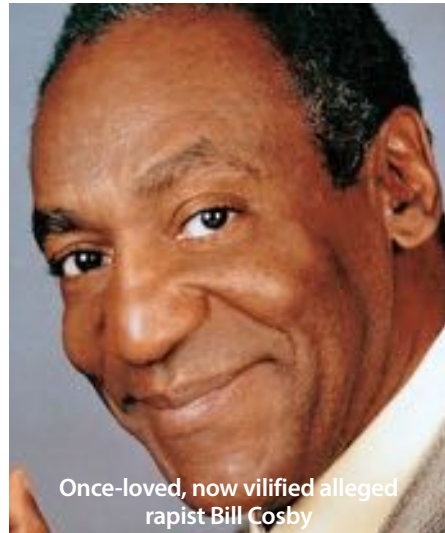
Allow me to offer a simple suggestion to the SABC. Why don't you get rid of some of those appallingly bad American shows and invest that money in more home-grown programmes, like Afrikaans-language dramas for instance.

One also needs to ask who chooses these American programmes. I for one cannot in any way relate to them – and I lived in America for a long time, so I do get the humour. Not that my fellow South Africans don't, but let's say we're not talking high-end laughter here.

Truth be said, why the heck do we have to endure the ludicrous *The Real* – five Hollywood hasbeens with no value whatsoever to offer? And what of the equally-stupid *Braxton Family Values*?

As for the *Meredith Viera Show*! For crying out loud the current episodes date back to December last year. SABC please get real with these absurdly meaningless shows. How much money is being spent on them? A pretty dollar I'll bet.

Now let's talk about this plethora of



home-grown dramas. SABC you need to talk sense to the production houses when commissioning these shows. They're all equally depressing and seem to emanate from but one production house, as they all carry the same overdone scenes of plotting and murder, with maddened black people constantly at each other's throats. I mean why must the characters have the angriest facial expressions they can muster most, if not all the time?

Please somebody, produce a Cosby-like home-grown show – without of course the sexual harassment or secretly plying women with drugs for sexual pleasure that the once-beloved Cosby has now been accused of by scores of women.

And while you are at it SABC, please make sure it's the script itself that's loud and in your face and not the actors

themselves. Too many black productions, and particularly local comedies, are constantly horribly noisy – can't actors deliver lines without yelling all the time? Boy – if the old saying "art imitates life" were true we'd have an annoyingly loud black populace, over-angry with twisted facial expressions. Geez, one would think the actors were regularly slapped in the face by the ghost of Verwoerd before getting on set.

Lastly, why must so many commercials have black people dancing around like a bunch of happy clowns? These commercials are not entertaining; personally I find them insulting. I'll also take the liberty of naming some examples of what really doesn't work.

KFC's "overload" commercial is one of the worst I have seen. For crying out loud, in a society where obesity is rife did this fast food franchise have to use that big mama? KFC should take a page out of the Spur advert, where a beautiful little girl watches rugby with daddy.

On the same note, kudos to the makers of Oreo cookies, for that absolutely lovely advert with a little girl under a tent with daddy. One also has to love the closing lines in these commercials: Spur with "Argh shame!" and Oreo with "it's complicated" – just brilliant.

But then maybe KFC got it right after all. Anyone who over-frequents a fast-food joint could well end up looking like the "overload" mama.

Oh! One more; Men's Clinic. If their character was in better physical shape maybe, just maybe, he would not have a problem getting it up or suffer from premature ejaculation etc. You want to impress me? Show me characters who take care of themselves – then and only then will your advert make an impact.

We really need to take a page from the African-American movement of the seventies that spoke out against the exploitation of the black image, with movies always casting blacks as pimps, prostitutes or drug dealers.

SABC owes it to the public to ensure we are portrayed in a positive light; this is not censorship but rather sensitivity. ■



Begats. Uncle Bongol

MY THREE-EIGHTHS COUSINS Foefie and Ferva van Tonder were the children of Bongol van Tonder, SAR/SAS stationmaster at Boksburg, who quite late in his career was appointed deputy stationmaster at Pietermaritzburg, a post of some prestige, let me tell you, and that's how he came to set up the family home in Mayor's Walk. Oom Bongol had a uniform with a grey waistcoat and a cap with a badge. Also a tie. It was he who first introduced to Pietermaritzburg the use of aftershave lotion, which all had thought was a risible pansy habit until Errol Flynn was seen to use it at the bioscope and they realised this was advanced culture from Joburg they were looking at, and even started putting stuff under their armpits and parts. This brief background I present to show we are talking about no crude platteland takhaar here but a man of considerable polish, and I shall now explain the family history which earned him his unusual soubriquet.

In 1678 Fifi du Tondre lived on the left-hand side of the Loire Valley, going in. As a mere slip of a girl she experienced a state of ecstasy one morning upon beholding the Holy Mother of Christ sitting in an apple tree, and became filled with such Fervour as to leave this as a family name evermore. At pubescence she beheld in a sudden satanic vision the treachery of King Henry IV in proclaiming the Edict of Nantes giving Protestants civil rights, and by adulthood she had become so enraged at this betrayal of the Mother Church that she went into profound ecstasy one night and put such phantasmagorical ubuthakathi on whoever was king just then as to kill him, surely. Thereafter King Louis XIV thought it a good idea to revoke the Edict of Nantes.

This was the cause of much satisfac-

tion to Pope Clement VIII, naturally, indeed a measure of glee, and he unusually and with great appreciation invited Fifi to embrace Holy Orders and become a Bride of Christ and if somebody were spitefully to knock her off one of these days he would see to it she got canonised as Sainte Halucienne of Nantes and a martyr nogal. Meanwhile she could chug along as Sister Halucienne du Tondre and do good works at home. But she, on going into a trance which gave her the power of



direct communication with God, popes etc, cried:

Heu mihi! Ast ego non Gallis servitum matribus ibo!

Which, interpreted, means: Hell no! I am not going to be slave to a bunch of old French bags! and took herself off to Africa, whither certain Huguenots had fled to lead their vile heretical lives, and where she would get the metaphorical boot into them until they returned to the sacred embrace of Rome. Arrived at Franschoek simply as Sister Ferva, armed with nought but Faith and a love of the great mural paintings of Rome, she established a mission in a cowshed, in the spirit of the Jesus-manger in Bethlehem. And as she set about beating the undergrowth to flush out all Protestant desperadoes and get the boot into them, there by strange coincidence emerged a true mural painter, name of Witbooi

!#/*!, a refugee from Prester John's Land whence he had been driven by an advancing Nguni horde clear down to Franschoek, where presently he went about seeking a modest cave in which to eat insects and practise his art.

Abandoning first her restrictive black raiment and then her restrictive vows of chastity as the Flame of Love was lighted within her, the now simple Ferva set about building by her own hand and his a modest cathedral with blank inner walls for sacred decoration by Witbooi. A labour of love. She demonstrated for him as best she could the painting style of Michelangelo, changed his heathen name to Garçonblanc du Tondre and set about establishing a Christian dynasty in Africa on the model of the Ricardi or Medici family in Italy. God in his infinite beneficence would feed the multitudinous issue of their loins.

Dreams! Dreams! It was the Huguenot community that gave them each day their daily bread, indeed

unto the event of the Great Trek, by which time of course every one of them was a full Protestant named either Ferva van Tonder or Garçonblanc van Tonder, the Mandela eyes and high cheekbones of Witbooi now classified as Huguenot features, carried via the genes of the dynasty to every family member unto this very day. And as naturally happens in language, Garçonblanc became abbreviated to Garblong for ease of speech, then to Blongar, and by the time the Van Tonder wagons reached today's Boksburg the name had become Bongol by association with Equus Bongolensis, the Biblical ass, which accompanied the Great Trek in great numbers. This should not be seen as denigration of any bearer of that name, however; it was the common ass which bore our saviour the Lord Jesus Christ on his triumphal passage through Jerusalem. ■

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