

17 March 2009

Now that opposition parties are beginning to speak of coalition, there may be some point in voting. The fact that they cling to their mainly ethnic party divisions instead of forming one opposition party demonstrates that we are still bound by apartheid thinking. Verwoerd still smiles down benignly on us.

16 February 2009

Yesterday Nelson Mandela made an unexpected appearance at an ANC election rally in the Eastern Cape. Why? To counteract the effect of Carl Niehaus's confession?

15 February Carl Niehaus

Having placed Carl Niehaus firmly in the category of heroic Afrikaners like Braam Fischer and Beyers Naude, I found his revelations, as recorded in the *Mail and Guardian* of 13 - 19 February 2009, a sad awakening.

Afrikaners who stood up against apartheid were among the bravest of the brave. Other Afrikaners regarded them with anathema for their 'betrayal' of the volk and they were made to suffer egregiously.

The article in *M&G*, which presents a weak confused man, forces one to apply the aphorism of absolute power and corruption to his actions and makes one question his motives for having joined the ANC. □

Was he simply one of the previously disempowered who, after 1994, found themselves in positions of power

, lost their perspective and like thieves began to divide up the spoils amongst themselves?

□

Soldiers, having fought a battle, are blown up by a sense of entitlement and like Janjaweed types go on rampages of looting and rape. □ How sad that heroes of the struggle descend to such a level.

Great men like Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi are

allocated to us once every hundred years and we spend all our time looking for them in vain among our present politicians. □□

□ 6 February 2009

The opening of parliament.□ A grand spectacle. The red carpet, the march of military bands, parliamentarians in designer outfits; all to emphasise that amandla has nothing to do with awethu.

We did our colonial masters proud.

Then Kgalema Monthlanthe's State of the Nation address in which he pointed out the ANC successes of the past fifteen years and then a quote from Nelson Mandela's book which made the point that successes of the past have not yet wiped out the terrible legacy of apartheid, that there was still much to be done and that would take many more years to come. All the opposition parties found the speech lacking; all ANC members found it impressive, outstanding.

I was glad that the events of the past couple of years have made all parties aware of poor service delivery, of the need to build sustainable development and an economy which provides for the poor and unemployed.

When Jacob Zuma was interviewed, he made the point that in order to overcome skills shortages, people need on the job training. That makes sense. I hope, however, that people will not be burdened with SETA and SAQA requirements but will be allowed to learn freely from instructors to whom they are apprenticed, just as people used to in the old days.

I hope too that someone will see that it is not necessary to force children to matric level.

Those who are academically inclined will naturally aim at matric but those who are

not should be allowed to leave once they have acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills and allowed to go into apprenticeships.

When they are ready for higher qualifications, they will do so as a result of being in the workplace and seeing the necessity for more training.

I hope too that the ruling party will make some attempt to allow mother tongue instruction in schools.

People wonder why our teachers and children struggle so with education.

It is so obvious.

It is difficult to learn through a foreign language.

A way should be found to allow children to

learn through the mother tongue. Where English is not the mother tongue or home language, it should be a second language that emphasises communication and the ability to negotiate the demands of major subjects.

My personal feeling is that education has been severely hampered by the creation of SETAs and SAQA.

2 February 2009

Politicians have a wonderful facility for wasting money, our money. If it were theirs, they would be more careful.

Think of those super submarines that we have bought for the battle -- against which super power? We didn't just buy them as toys for our boys in blue, surely.

Now I watch all political parties embarking on election campaigns. Sheer waste of

money. The ANC does not need to campaign. □ Its faithful adherents will give it the majority in government.

The opposition parties busy dancing before their tiny groups of followers, put on their shows, their TV performances, promising to cure all the ills of South Africa.

They all sing the same song but , like a bunch of pop idols, each one wants to win the big prize while none of them has a hope of doing so.

They don't seem to have noticed that they all sing the same song only the tunes are different.

□

If they had any sense they would be forming an alliance now before the election and giving us, the voters, a clear choice, an opportunity to vote for a strong opposition

that will end the monopoly of the ruling party. □ But they are too tied to their egos and their ethnicities to become a united opposition.

All this electioneering is simply □ a waste of tax payers' money.

Meanwhile the leaders of African countries are beginning to talk earnestly of a United States of Africa. □ Will it be another organisation like the SADC? □ Will it elect Mugabe as its first President?

29 January 2009

Amandla Awethu means power to the people. □ In the manner in which President Barack Obama conducted his election campaign, he demonstrated this.

For politicians to recognise that

democracy means power to the people is unusual.

Normally, politicians take amandla awethu to mean power to the politician.

What we need in South Africa are politicians like President Obama, who care about the people, who understand their responsibility to the people.

Now that over a million ordinary people who are dependent on bus transport are being left in the lurch by striking bus drivers and the government subsidised bus

system is on the verge of collapse because subsidies have not been paid since November 2008, we see that power is not to the people.

The politicians are not fulfilling their responsibility to the poor.

I look at the electioneering going on and more promises being made to the poor. □ Can we believe people who do not demonstrate that power is to the people?

23 January 2009

Election manifestos are empty

promises. □ One cannot choose a party by what it promises it will do. In the coming election, only those who plan to vote for the ANC can have any satisfaction in going to the polls. □ The rest do not have a real choice and are wasting their time.

They are in the minority and they are asked to choose from among 147 parties.

What is the point?

These tiny and minute parties have no power to achieve anything.

What we need is a ruling party with a strong opposition otherwise we do not have democracy.

Democracy depends on vigorous debate in parliament.

14 January 2009

The Bloemfontein Supreme Court judgment on Monday, 12 January 2009, overturned Judge Nicholson's judgement in Pietermaritzburg, 12 September 2008. □ Nicholson did not dismiss the Zuma case on the grounds of the charges that were brought against Zuma but on points of procedure

for the case that was before him in September.

He clearly left the door open for the continued prosecution of Zuma.

That is how I read his judgment.

Pre-September 12, 2008, the whole justice system was under threat. Whatever one thinks of Nicholson's judgment, it was a judgment that averted a very dangerous situation at the time. □ Thousands of belligerent ANC members were camped outside the Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court buildings, waiting for the

opportunity to lash out against an adverse judgment. □

Had the judgment gone against Zuma, who knows what would have happened?

Pietermaritzburg could have been plunged into a bloodbath.

Personally I am grateful to Judge Nicholson for defusing a very dangerous situation.

We could have been reduced to another Somalia, Darfur, Congo, Rwanda, another banana republic.

The threat still hangs over us even though the need to intimidate the judiciary was lessened after the Nicholson judgment. Judge Nicholson gave us the respite to pull ourselves together and reassert our respect for the law and the independence of the judiciary.

Now with the Bloemfontein ruling against Zuma, ANC spokespersons are careful to mention their respect for the rule of law.

Who knows, however, when the monster of anarchy will raise its ugly head again?

No one knows.

That is why the Supreme Court in Bloemfontein was secured against violence unlike the Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg.

12 January 2009

Now we hear that 150 parties are registered for the 2009 elections. And so we continue the apartheid legacy; our inability to think outside of the clan; our inability to acknowledge

that people who are not of our particular persuasion can actually have the interests of all people at heart. Democracy depends on a certain level of trust.

Apartheid was not democratic because it was based on distrust.

How can we ever be a united people when each tiny group clings to its own particular interests? How can we ever stop being racists when the people who offer to govern us think along narrow group lines and demand that we follow them into eternal divisiveness?

We do not need an opposition split into 150

powerless groups who can achieve nothing and can only be regarded as opportunists deluding the small groups who support them into believing that they can achieve anything for anyone.

It is clear that they do not want democracy; that they only mouth democratic slogans and their only policy making ability consists in hurling brickbats at the ruling party. We will never have democracy in our country as long as there is no real debate in parliament, as long as policies cannot be really challenged and refined to ensure that all human rights are protected and that there is real development to eradicate poverty, unemployment and crime. Viva apartheid, viva.

As long as the ANC has a two-thirds majority in parliament, we have no opposition and no

democracy.

14 December 2008

Having just watched the first convention of the Congress of the People (COPE) on television, I was very happy to see how well the new party is supported. Thank goodness. Perhaps now, one party rule will come to an end in South Africa. Strong parties in competition for our votes is the only way to ensure accountability of government. Now perhaps our votes will have some meaning.

12 December 2008

Sewage is being dumped into the Vaal River, not by renegades or people of informal settlements, but by one of our municipalities. How long before we catch up with Zimbabwe?

'Zimbabwe' is rapidly become a catchword for corruption, tyrannical rule and gross inhumanity.

Is 'AU' also becoming a term for pusillanimous, indecisive self-preservation?

What kind of leaders do we have who do not have the courage to condemn criminal behaviour?

10 December 2008

The ANC did not meet the deadline for registering candidates for local elections in the Western Cape and its appeal was denied by the IEC. The decision of the IEC was upheld by the

courts and now the matter is going to the Constitutional Court.

Will the judiciary bow once more to political considerations ? Do we or do we not believe in the independence of the judiciary?

Why is the AU unable to take firm action with regard to Zimbabwe? Does it not regard genocide as a crime against humanity? Is a megalomaniac more worthy of saving than the whole population of the country?

09 December 2008

A few days ago, Gwede Mantashe of the ANC blamed the split in the ANC on imperialists.

Robert Mugabe has been blaming the genocide in Zimbabwe on the UK and the US.

Yesterday, Kgalima Montlanye fired Vusi Pikole of the National Prosecuting Authority and completed the ANC's programme of eliminating opposition from judicial and prosecutorial authorities.

03 December 2008

The cancer that arises from the oncogenes of greed, corruption and megalomania, has metastasized to all parts of Zimbabwe and we are watching a country in its dying throes.

And the oncogenes are busy at work in our own country.

27 November 2008

Today we hear that 70% of civil servants are under skilled for the positions that they occupy.

They lack managerial, financial and accounting

skills and what we have is a situation of mediocrity. We are told that the government's skills development programme is a failure and the skills shortage will lead to importation of labour.

It is easier to get away with a lack of skills in the public sector where it takes much longer to deal with poor service.

It takes at least a year to get rid of underperforming employees. With our lack of skills, there should be on the job training but bureaucratic requirements have turned this into paper pushing exercises.

Part of the blame for skills shortages must be placed on education which unfortunately is bedevilled by the same bureaucratic demand for paper pushing rather than real learning. In good faith, the government adopted practices, imported from other countries, and imposed them on our people.

This meant the development of the huge bureaucracy that controls education, a bureaucracy that benefits policy makers and disseminators of policies and places an inordinate amount of oversight on education and training that is as debilitating as apartheid education.

27 November 2008

Today we hear that money laundering and theft charges against Ngoako Ramathlodi have been dropped.

The cholera epidemic which has spread round Zimbabwe and has become a matter of major concern in South Africa with thousands of refugees fleeing across the border. But the Zimbabwe government says that there is no crisis and the situation is under control. In South Africa our medical services are under high alert and we are doing all we can to contain the spread of cholera. It seems that the crisis is only on our side of the border. How terrible it is when governments refuse to take responsibility for the chaos into which they plunge their countries.

23 November 2008

Corruption/Poverty, like Governors/Governed, are two sides of a coin. Fraud, bribery and misappropriation of funds keep the impoverished, impoverished.

Now, the government needs the support of the impoverished to make successes of the FIFA Confederation Cup and the FIFA World Cup, and is appealing to the impoverished, who do not have the funds, to support such events.

It is always the poor who have to support the rich.

There is little to choose between governments. Under apartheid, the Indian and Coloured communities, being tiny minorities and not a great threat, were given limited 'privileges' so that they would be a buffer between the white community and the black community. Then the apartheid government tried to build a Black middle class but, hampered by its doctrine of discrimination, was only able to begin the process. After 1994, however, with BEE that initiative was brought to proper fruition. Now the Black middle class provides the buffer between the government and the impoverished.

And racism continues to flourish in multi-party government which keeps ethnicity, racism and religious discrimination alive.



21 November 2008

Today Simon Grindrod is showing the way. He has left the Independent Democrats to join COPE.

As I am totally against multi-party government where one party has a two-thirds majority and the last third is divided up into 146 minority parties whose own individual existences are more important than the creation of a civilized society in which people live together in a fair amount of security, I applaud Grindrod's decision.

The split in the ANC has unexpectedly and happily opened the way for more open

government and Grindrod acknowledges that.

We can only become like Zimbabwe if we continue to be ruled by a party that is so powerful that it is not accountable to the people.

If we have one other party as powerful, then we the ordinary citizens will have real choice and our votes will mean something.

Corruption and fraud go out of hand where there are no real checks and balances.

With a government party and a strong opposition party, we will have politicians who keep a policing eye on one another.

That is good because we can't control them but they can control each other if they are powerful

enough.

Then perhaps not so many of our tax rands will be diverted to private pockets.

Yesterday we heard that the National Prosecuting Authority is about to descend on Ngoako Ramathlodi in connection with a 785,000 rand allocation and today's newspaper headlines read, Gautrain millions missing.

20 November 2008

Today we look at the possibility of an early election date. Carl Niehaus, spokesperson for Z-ANC appears on *Morning Live* and states categorically that the ANC cannot make

the decision to bring the election forward.

This is the function of the President of South Africa, Kgalema Mphahlele (also Deputy President of Z-ANC) in consultation with the IEC.

Reading between the lines, he is assuring us that Z-ANC is not pushing for early elections to catch COPE and other opposition groups off-guard and the President will not be influenced by the ANC NEC meeting which is to take place this weekend at which the election date is simply one of many items on the agenda. The President of the country will be

attending the NEC meeting in his capacity as Deputy President of the ANC and a member of the ANC NEC.

Ngoako Ramathlodi, former Premier of Limpopo , who faces prosecution by the National Prosecuting Authority in connection with an allocation of 700 million rand during his term of office, will also be attending the NEC meeting. He was elected to the NEC at the ANC's Polokwane conference.

In the TV interview, Niehaus also responds to questions about Z-ANC's intention to take legal action against COPE for its use of ANC symbols and for its name. He explains that the name COPE was taken from the National Convention of the People in 1955. He explains that this was an ANC convention: the Congress of Democrats, the South African Indian Congress, The Coloured People's Congress and SACTU were all in some way affiliated to the ANC and came together in the National Convention under the banner of the ANC. This argument is open to debate.

With regard to COPE's logo, he explains that it has been adapted from the ANC logo which shows a circle under the flag. He expresses the wish that the Shikota Party will find its own identity and name and set itself up clearly as a separate party.

COPE's inability to cut itself off from the ANC will cause confusion especially among African people in whose languages Congress of the People is synonymous with ANC.

In my opinion, the parasitism of COPE makes L-ANC no better than Z-ANC. In any case, they don't have much credibility for me because they were part of the ruling party that allowed

corruption to grow among its ranks.

So we continue fighting over which is the real ANC while cholera is beginning to seep into the country from our generous neighbours in Zimbabwe where maladministration and corruption over decades is now manifesting itself very concretely in the form of cholera.

Perhaps we may never have the opportunity to destroy ourselves in a similar manner; our close proximity to Zimbabwe will do it for us.

In the programme View from the House, which took us into parliament, it was plain to see how ineffective debate is when you have a ruling party with a two-thirds majority. Despite objections from nine opposition parties, parliament passed the Amendment to the SABC Board and the legislation that finally brought an end to the Scorpions. We are in effect a one-party state.

The split in the ANC has raised the hope that we will not continue to be so in the future.

19 November 2008

L-ANC which is called Shikota in the media, announced its acronym as COPE, I obviously missed that. Today its name Congress of the People is being challenged by Z-ANC, which claims Congress of the People as part of ANC history, as it refers to the National Convention of 1955 held at Kliptown. To see the two-headed ruling party squabbling over names and not explaining to a voter like me how they plan to deal with corruption which leads to poverty, unemployment and crime, makes me understand why Archbishop Tutu has declared why he will not vote in next year's election.

As Hamilton Wende puts it, 'Where are the leaders who offer us a decent alternative?'

Why are you silent?

There are millions of us who are waiting for you?'

But I am not waiting. I don't believe there is such a thing as decent leadership; that is an ideal. If only politicians could commit themselves to attaining it but we all know the old saying: power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The absolute is at the top but we have gradations of it all along the line from the lowest civil servant to leaders of parties.

All we need do is look at the Auditor General's report on the Department of Home Affairs.

Politicians have a myopic view of needs, only their own; how can they be trusted? And the two-headed ANC is busy fighting for the populist vote so they can stay in power and continue to fill their pockets as their revered comrades are doing in many other countries in Africa. Q

quoting Wende again, 'In South Africa, as we approach our next elections, all the gains we have fought for are being threatened by the same hostile, greedy populism that has damaged so much of this continent.'

When I look at the structure of parliament, I see it, not as a reflection of the new, but rather as an extension of the old: it is the establishment of the Group Areas Act at the highest level of government. It has kept intact racial and ethnic interests.

It has succeeded where the Tri-Cameral Parliament of the early 1980s failed.

No wonder people are beginning to revert to racial understandings of developments in our country.

Even now, when it is so clear that an opposition consisting of a myriad splinter groups is ineffective, each little splinter group still clings to its parochial ethnicity or race and cannot forfeit it in order to form a cohesive opposition.

Each imagines it has the only real

understanding of true democracy.

They still don't demonstrate that they understand that democracy is a process and that it is not resident in ideology or religion.

But being politicians motivated by greed, they equate democracy with party power.

The split in the ANC has had one good consequence. It has shaken people's blind loyalty to the ANC. The ANC of the struggle was focused on freedom; the ANC of government is focused on self-aggrandisement.

With the split in the ruling party, people are questioning what the ANC stands for, what the word democracy means, and how the electoral system has given rise corruption.

It also has all the political parties vociferously making new promises about ending corruption, poverty, unemployment and crime.

We have heard all that before.

Hopefully people, who constitute the populist vote, have been shaken out of their somnolence and will question whether their loyalty has been misplaced.

13 November 2008

On 7 November L-ANC changed its name again to Congress of the People, which rings with reference to the ANC, namely the People's Convention of 1955. COP, the acronym is in my opinion unfortunate given our history, will contest local election in the Western Cape on 2 December.

The split in the ANC has led to vociferous rhetoric from all sides that actually addresses the needs of the majority population which is poor, unemployed and subject to continuous violence. If only one could believe in the

promises of politicians.

The Democratic Alliance sees the split in the ANC as providing the opportunity for its party to become a governing rather than an opposition party.

Other opposition parties are finally admitting that the split of opposition into 146 parties serves only to strengthen the ruling party and are now beginning to talk of cooperation.

13 November 2008 □ □ Today the L-ANC has become the South African Democratic Congress; it has at last given up its attempt to establish itself as the legitimate ANC.

Now that it is a South African party, that suggests a greater openness and does not seem ethnically bound.

5 □ □ November 2008 □ Today we hear that

L-ANC which had changed its name to South African Democratic Congress has changed its name again to South African National Convention. There's that ANC acronym creeping in again. This, however, is only a temporary designation until the L-ANC can come up with an acceptable name for the new party.

2 November 2008

I watched the TV programme Interface, a programme in which invited guests discuss political issues. Tonight we had Mosioua Lekota, Zwelenzima Vavi (of the Z-ANC) and

Professor Tinyiko Maluleke (independent analyst) with the same presenter as in the morning's press conference. The presenter again asked, as she had asked during the press conference, what the difference was between L-ANC and Z-ANC. This time Lekota explained that the L-ANC had not yet formulated its policies. S

he asked again what evidence L-ANC had for stating that Z-ANC had reneged on the democratic principles of the ANC. Lekota mentioned the intimidation of the judiciary, disrespect for the rule of law, the disbanding of the Scorpions, the expressions of a readiness to kill in order to assert the power of Z-ANC.

When Lekota and Zwelenzima Vavi were questioned as to why as members of the ruling party, they had not addressed the problems of poor service delivery, unemployment and poverty, both began to rationalise.

The independent guest Professor Tinyiko

Maluleke put the question plainly: Why was neither side prepared to take responsibility for the problems of governance when both sides were of the ruling party.

At this Lekota took personal responsibility for government's shortcomings.

I was left with the feeling that 'democracy' had been lost in the struggle for power. I believe that the split in the ANC, with new professions of 'democracy', has been necessary to refocus governance on more humane provision for the governed, especially the poor and unemployed, but also for the creation of a society in which corruption and crime do not ride roughshod

over civilized values. In one party states, the ruling party does not have an opposition capable of keeping it within the bounds of good governance. In South Africa, with multi-party government, we have divided the opposition into 146 different splinter groups each with its own parochial agenda, each bent on party power, none capable of making possible good governance. I am very glad that L-ANC is speaking of electoral reform.

We need a form of government in which the ruling party can be challenged in parliament, in council chambers, in non-governmental organisations and at the polls.

With 147 versions of 'democracy' in South Africa, I no longer feel comfortable using the word democracy; it no longer has meaning for me. It has become a childish myth, a fairy tale.

2 November 2008

I tuned in to the SABC broadcast, which purportedly was to be of the L-ANC Convention Press Conference. After Shilowa presented the rationale for the breakaway and a promise that the proposed new party, which would be named on 15 December, would conform to democratic processes that allowed freedom of thought and

expression, equality before the law and respect for all, I suddenly found myself at the mercy of the SABC. The broadcaster couldn't decide whether to concentrate on the press conference, the presenter with her guests, flashbacks to yesterday's convention or the rally that was being held at Jabulani Stadium in Soweto by Z-ANC. The programme jumped from one venue to another, not allowing people more than several vivas and amandlas each except of course for the Jabulani rally, which was a long series of vivas and amandlas.

As Jacob Zuma had not yet arrived, we were whisked back to the presenter and people making statements were often cut short because the programme producer wasn't sure where to catch the most newsworthy item.

At one stage there was a flashback to the convention showing Helen Zille, walking on waving the South African flag, then kissing

Shilowa and the programme presenter, then turning to address the huge gathering.

She was allowed to shout several vivas to which there was a tremendous response, but not allowed another word as we were switched back to the presenter and her guests, two political analysts, representatives of several political parties, Bantu Holomisa of the UDM, Motlatso of the Democratic Alliance, Lionel Mtshali of the IFP, Steve Swart of the ACDP, Lance Greyling of the Independent Democrats and at the end Maluleke George of the L-ANC.

All were vociferous about defending the constitution and democracy; all were ambivalent about coalition.

The presenter mentioned that Helen Zille had stated that this was the time for coalitions, but of course we had not been allowed to hear her speech. Instead we had to listen ad nauseum to presenters repeating their introductions over

and over.

Tomorrow's newspapers may provide more satisfying reportage.

2 November 2008

Yesterday, thousands of disaffected ANC members met in a National Convention at Sandton City convention centre, to declare their independence from the ruling ANC Party and their readiness to form a new party that would adhere to the democratic principles that the ruling party apparently has ambushed. It is unfortunate that the breakaway group under the leadership of Mosioua Lekota and Mbazima Shilowa called their convention the African National Convention.

Why the adherence to the acronym 'ANC?'

Unwillingness to relinquish a name?

Unwillingness to risk venturing out under a new name?

Fear that the acronym has an occult significance with the power to draw the masses

and keep them inexorably tied to it?

As Shakespeare pointed out a rose by any other name will still smell the same.

Why do they not fear that?

In the run-up to the convention, Lekota's breakaway group (L-ANC) has professed that it is in possession of true democracy while Zuma's ANC (Z-ANC) has branded the new grouping as charlatan, declared that its emergence is not a matter of concern and vilifies it as greed for power and the inability of individuals to work within Z-ANC democratic structures. Former President Thabo Mbeki

has written a letter to Gwede Mantashe, Secretary-General of Z-ANC, in which, according to Mantashe, Mbeki disassociates himself from L-ANC. As the letter is considered a private communiqué that cannot be published, we have to guess and it seems that Mbeki, like Pontius Pilate, has washed his hands off both L-ANC and Z-ANC.

Scenes on TV depicting members of L-ANC doffing T-shirts and depositing resignation forms in boxes, were reminiscent of the burning of passes (Gandhi 1906, Sharpeville, 1960).

Then an array of speakers was shown addressing the convention but we were not made privy to the declarations; among the speakers, Helen Zille of the Democratic Alliance, Bantu Holomisa of the United Democratic Movement, Kenneth Meshoe, the leader of the African Christian Democratic Party, Patricia de Lille of the Independent Democrats each representing different brands of democracy.

Now we wait for the L-ANC press conference at 10:00 this morning to find out what the latest brand of democracy will be.

16 October 2008

Yesterday, Mbazima Shilowa, who resigned as Premier of Gauteng some ten days ago, resigned from the ANC. This seems to be a principled stand unlike Lekota's; the latter's statement of serving divorce papers on the ANC keeps the factions tied

together in acrimony. Lekota's membership of the ANC was suspended a few days ago, a first step towards a disciplinary hearing and expulsion.

There seems to be a reluctance on both sides

to end the relationship. Is it an indication of inability to take decisive action?

Lekota and Shilowa are moving towards a National Convention. Shilowa announced that it would be held on 2 November. Both Lekota and Shilowa are non-committal about forming a new party. Do they hope to oust the Zuma faction and keep the name of the ANC?

Thousands of disgruntled ANC members are backing Lekota giving the lie to the Zuma faction's assertion that within the ANC there is plenty of opportunity to voice differing viewpoints and that these lead to consensual decision making.

The trouble with governance is that it breaks down into governors and the governed. The governed simply want to go about their lives in peace and stability and leave it to the governors to provide these conditions.

Governors, dealing with the diversity of the individuals for whom they have to cater, struggle to find the right formula and become embroiled in different ideologies, each faction claims that its version of democracy is the definitive one.

And ideologies become religions, new opiates of the masses. Each of these religious denominations: socialist democracy, liberal democracy, multi-party democracy etc have their commandments and anyone who is an adherent has to obey or face excommunication.

Perhaps it would be better if we did not run societies based on ideological theories but on human needs without turning those needs into a credo.

09 October 2008

Yesterday, Mosioua Lekota announced that there would be a call for a democratic convention within the next few weeks. This is clearly a strategy to assess whether a breakaway group from the ANC could set up a viable opposition party to the new leadership in the ruling party.

This call does not indicate a clear, principled stand; the breakaway faction is hedging its bets. It will only break away if it can garner sufficient support.

Unfortunately in South Africa, despite all our talk of democracy, we still involuntarily cling to the legacy of apartheid. Multi-party government is its new form.

Two thirds of the population are stalwart supporters of the ANC, most of whom vote along racial and ethnic lines.

The ruling party depends on this kind of unquestioning support. The remaining one third is split into minute parties with Zulus for Zulus, Afrikaners for Afrikaners, Liberals for Liberals, Indians for Indians, Christians for Christians, and so on. So there can be no effective opposition in government.

Without opposition we have a one-party state.

Without opposition there is no effective debate and that means no effective democracy.

The ruling party not parliament, therefore, is the

government.

The ruling party, therefore, can recall the President of the country without giving any reason for doing so.

In anticipation of the big bang, a split in the ANC that offers the hope of creating a viable opposition, opposition parties put out tentative amalgamation feelers and wait. The many attempts at coalitions among the tiny opposition groups indicate clearly that Multi-Party Government cannot work where one party has a two-thirds majority. Are they groping awkwardly towards the old Westminster

system? Did we
examine that system carefully before we
rejected it? At
least there, debate and opposition are lively.

But we opted for consensual decision-making and as we see with the problems that have manifested in the ANC that it is often a means of silencing differing viewpoints rather than a means of giving careful consideration to the complexities of problems.

We are demonstrating for ourselves that democracy is merely a shibboleth and no constitution can guarantee fairness and justice.

Even the ancient Greeks, who came up with the notion of democracy, excluded women and condoned slavery.

23 September 2008

This morning the announcement is made that Kgalema Motlanthe, Deputy President of the ANC, will become the Caretaker State President.

Also in the news: Mbeki will appeal against Judge Nicholson's judgment on the grounds that he has been indicted without having first been given the opportunity to put his case, the very same grounds used by the judge to exonerate Zuma and to indict the National Prosecuting Authority and President Mbeki.

Some opposition groups in Parliament, not the Inkatha Freedom Party, not the Independent Democrats, this morning oppose the 'recall' of President Thabo Mbeki but the majority in parliament accept his resignation.

At 13:00, E TV Newsday announces that 14 cabinet ministers have resigned in the wake of Mbeki's resignation.

I have to agree there is no fight in the ANC; it is out and out war.

22 September 2008

An ANC Press Conference at Luthuli House. □ Zuma declares that any member of the ANC is capable of carrying out important governmental functions, including that of State President.

The implication is that the ANC

collective, which makes all decisions, is the President, the Cabinet etc.

Furthermore, because of consensus, there is no fight in the ANC; that is simply a media fabrication.

Didn't Mbeki go quietly and with dignity reaffirming his allegiance to the ANC?

21 September 2008

President Mbeki addresses the nation and announces his imminent resignation.

21 September 2008

There is an old saying, there is no honour among thieves. The comrades have deposed their comrade leader - the scapegoater has been scapegoated and like a dutiful comrade, he bows to the consensual will of the party.

Now political decision-making of the party takes precedence over all other kinds of decision-making. The call to drop all charges against Zuma was a political decision.

The judicial decision that found invalid the

procedures

adopted in charging Zuma, concurred, at least in the eyes of the new party bosses, with their political decision that the

charges

were invalid.

Now party political decision-making appears to supersede judicial decision-making and has become the new credo of the new ruling elite and from its perspective gives it immunity from the law, allows it to stand outside the law and to dictate to the law.

The new elite could not, in this case, resort to the usual ploy, the race card, since it was dealing with black on black matters.

With Mbeki out of the way, the scramble for power may begin in earnest. Everyone is laying claim to a portion of the pie; the alliance is united only in its demand for a share.

Alongside, the Youth League that played a major role in ridding the party of its jaundiced leadership, needs its share; Veterans are also clamouring for their share and who knows how many more stakeholders will pop out of the woodwork. Some of them can be seen on a rerun of the tape of 12 September, kissing Zuma's cheek at the end of the judgment in Pietermaritzburg.

Anticipation of thirty pieces of silver?

Meanwhile bemused comrades, with befuddled notions of struggle solidarity, cannot see that comrades can morph into a mafia.

As long as we adopt a policy of appointment, rather than election, so long will corruption in government institutions rise to levels that destabilise societies. Appointment of governors is not new in South Africa.

The apartheid government tried it with the Homelands Policy and the Coloured and Indian Councils. We said it didn't work then; why did we think it would work now?

Appointees will always owe their loyalty to appointers and ordinary people will always be kept out of the equation.

Not that the people ever govern; they only give their consent to government. Under benign

leadership, most of their needs are met.

Where they live under oppression, their fate is to endure - apartheid, totalitarianism, criminal dictatorship.

Democracy, the Freedom Charter, Ubuntu are the carrots that keep them going.

12 September 2008

Having just listened to the judgment in the Zuma Hearing, my view has been confirmed that corruption flourishes in governments where all those in power are not elected by the people but are appointed by the party. Ministers of Justice, National Directors of Public Prosecution (i.e. Attorney Generals), The National Prosecuting Authority (our FBI) and the President have all been indicted in one way or another. It was made clear that there was collusion between politicians and the prosecuting authorities whose actions against Zuma were unjust.

But that does not mean he was innocent.

If they had acted fairly, he would have been brought to trial long ago.

Now they have made it very difficult to try Zuma so there may never be a case and justice may never be served.

Why did they resort to devious means?

Fear of exposing their own culpability?

The mad desire for power has turned the arms deal into the means for blackmail and counter-blackmail.

And as long as government is simply the market-place of power, there can be no real development.

Perhaps in the not too distant future, like the Zimbabweans who pay five million dollars for a bun, we too will be sitting with a ruined economy while some neighbouring state president comes to mediate between the factions in the ruling party.

Collective Consensual Decision-Making

In collective consensual decision-making, the membership makes all decisions. Decisions have to be unanimous and are binding on all members who are expected to conform and be loyal.

This is how laws are made in the country, except that laws are put to the vote and are not

unanimous. And we have a legislature that is permanently in place to monitor the application of laws and to make amendments where necessary.

This is acknowledgment that laws are not infallible and is a safeguard against injustice and despotism. Decision-making cannot be absolutely rigid and inflexibility is a mark of bureaucratic despotism.

Collective decisions that have to be unanimous, deny individual initiative in situations not originally envisaged at the

collective level. Returning to the collective for all decisions is bureaucratic and as parties are not in session throughout the year, modifying decisions becomes problematic.

Once a group gives its allegiance to principles of democracy, individuals in the group should be able to be trusted to act always in terms of those principles; should be able to be trusted when deviating from a collective decision to respond to contingencies, to

conform to accepted democratic principles.

When an individual is not allowed to exercise her/his discretion in unforeseen circumstances, it indicates a lack of trust in the individual and a tenuous adherence to the principles of democracy. Trust in individuals is the risk we take in building our societies.

However, where individual expressions such as 'we will kill' (for reasons outside the contexts of war and danger) are rationalised in the collective, loyalty becomes blind allegiance to power and not to democratic principles.

30 June 2008

When the new South Africa was born everyone celebrated our constitution; it was considered a remarkable document, the most democratic of constitutions in all the world. If that is so how did we end up with a system of government in which the ordinary citizen's vote counts for nothing?

Were there two groups: one that drew up a constitution for some fairy tale country and another that put together a structure that would rob ordinary people of the power to exert any influence on government, that would make them accept the illusion of democracy and rob them even of their old indignation at not having a say in government?

Is our constitution merely a veneer over a similar kind of oligarchy that existed under

apartheid?

A Multi-Party Government in which people vote for parties rather than representatives who live among them, whom they know, with whom they can communicate, whom they choose because they are accountable to the people who vote for them, removes all power from the people. When we vote for a party, the party bosses decide who will take charge at local, provincial and governmental levels. As a result there is a jockeying for position within the party and accountability is transferred from the voters to the party bosses and the aim of so-called people's representatives becomes the

procurement of power.

That leads to corruption in all its most execrable manifestations and is aggravated by the centralisation of administrative functions.

Politicians in multi-party governments are, by the nature of the structure in which they operate, drawn into power mongering, into incestuous party politics, into delusions of grandeur.

The situation is exacerbated by floor crossing in parliament. When an MP crosses the floor, s/he seeking greater power and influence,

forgets the voters and gravitates towards more favourable personal opportunities, usually to be found in the ruling party. Nothing is a clearer demonstration of the divide between people and rulers. Once elected, government officials become a law unto themselves. There is no accountability to the voters.

Only the vote for true representatives of the people guarantees some measure of accountability as it makes possible the unseating of corrupt, ineffective politicians.

Multi-party governments, meant to ensure a fair distribution of power, become betrayals of the voters because they place emphasis on the party; betrayals most of all of those they call 'the poorest of the poor,' often those most loyal to them, those on whom they have a traditional hold, those who believe in empty promises. And government becomes government of the people, by the party, for the party.

Without accountability to the people, there is no democracy.

Ubuntu is easily forgotten in the pursuit of power and personal aggrandisement.