

The Citizen

Another promise has been broken

Last year Finance Minister Trevor Manuel pledged R300 million in agricultural aid to Zimbabwe but only, he said, when an internationally-recognised government of national unity was in place.

President Kgalema Motlanthe underlined this.

What a short memory our government has. Long before the dubious power-sharing deal was signed last week, aid bought by South African taxpayers' rands had moved into Zimbabwe – before Christmas reportedly – and straight into the grubby paws of Robert Mugabe and his Zanu-PF.

Independent Newspapers report the aid, mostly seed, fertiliser and fuel from SA companies went into the newly-formed Zimbabwe Development Assistance Framework – a creation by SADC on paper alone – and into regions still controlled by Zanu-PF. One farmer was reportedly denied seed or fertiliser because he did not have a party card.

If this sounds familiar, it is.

Like Mugabe's land redistribution programme which has succeeded not in empowering rural people to cultivate their own land, but in enriching the then ruling party's elite. Consequently Zimbabwe has plunged rapidly from being a net exporter of agricultural produce to a country where some seven million now need emergency food aid according to the World Food Programme.

In addition, the seeds from SA's handout arrived too late to plant for the next harvest while the fertiliser was the wrong kind for the current growing season.

So R300 million goes to prolong the political survival of Robert Mugabe and his cronies and underlines once more the SA government's mendacious, undemocratic and continued support for this African tyrant.

We have helped deliver the ultimate prize to Zimbabwe: a stable and legitimate government geared to address the challenges that the people face, Motlanthe said in Parliament on Friday. What bosh.



Sport for the cruel

Dog racing dying in US – for humane reasons

Stating the obvious

It is reassuring for the nation to hear from ANC president Jacob Zuma that he will not quash criminal charges against him when he becomes SA president – and he will step aside if convicted.

That's nice to know. But it's pretty much stating the obvious. It appears Zuma may finally have his day in court, despite his ongoing and prolonged efforts to avoid it. And if convicted there are a few constitutional reasons why he could not continue to be president of the country, despite

the misguided optimism of Julius Malema and his ilk.

It still begs the question why Zuma doesn't remove himself from presidential contention until after his case. He has said there are many others in the ANC who could rise to the challenge.

It showed the strength of SA's democracy, he said, that there wasn't a "civil war" when he was axed as Deputy President, or when Thabo Mbeki was "recalled". Yes, really. These people do think they could bring the country down. Some democracy.

I write to urge against commercial dog racing in South Africa. Good public policy argues against such action.

In the US, greyhound racing is a dying industry, inherently cruel to the dogs. When introduced to our country in the 1920s, it could not be foreseen that thousands of dogs would suffer and die. Records were not kept of track injuries or deaths, and the public had no way of knowing what really happened to racing dogs in the past.

Today, thanks to the enactment of Sunshine laws in various states, track records are now public documents. In Massachusetts, a dog is injured every three to four days. Colorado reported 2 600 injuries from 1993-2007. In neighbouring New Hampshire, 1 200 injuries have occurred since January 2005. These include broken bones, cardiac arrest, paralysis and seizures. The most frequent injuries are broken legs, but broken necks and crushed skulls are also reported each year. Some dogs die while racing, while others are put down because of the severity of their injuries or because of their diminished value as racers.

When not racing, the dogs are confined in warehouse-style kennels; small, stacked cages which are too

CHRISTINE DORCHAK



small to allow free movement. Other than for brief turn-out periods, greyhounds live restricted for an average of twenty hours per day. The average greyhound stands thirty inches at the shoulder, but a standard cage size in the US is just 32" wide by 41" deep by 34" high.

The standard diet for dogs in the racing industry is rejected and they are fed diseased meat from downed animals. Deemed "4-D" by the federal government, this flesh may not be sold for human consumption; but it is purchased at very low cost by greyhound trainers and owners. Some argue that rotten meat spurs dogs to run faster, but the real reason for its use is the low cost. As revenues continue to plummet, it is essential that tracks and kennels keep overheads as

low as possible. This reality suggests that veterinary care may also be subject to a cost-benefit analysis.

The decline of greyhound racing has grown for years. Not only have humane concerns come to the forefront, but competition from other forms of gambling has forced tracks to close. Since 2004 alone, 16 American tracks have shut and nine states have made greyhound gambling illegal.

The best example I can offer is the most recent. In November 2008, GREY2K USA placed a question before Massachusetts voters asking for an end to dog racing in the state, and for the closure of its two dog tracks. The public was provided the tracks' own injury records and given access to racing footage. As a result, people came to understand that as long as dog racing continued, greyhounds would suffer. Moreover, there had been a 37% decline in revenue over the last three years at one track, and 65% at the other. In weighing out the waning benefits to the state against the cruelty that dogs suffer, the citizens of Massachusetts voted for the dogs' and outlawed greyhound gambling by a 56%-44% margin statewide.

Dorchak is president of GREY2K USA, an American greyhound protection organisation

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

“Elections are won by men and women chiefly because most people vote against somebody rather than for some body.”

FRANKLIN PIERCE ADAMS (1881-1960)
American journalist

HOW OTHERS SEE IT

Psychiatry can do wonders for potential suicides

IT is our civic duty to identify depressives and do everything possible to persuade them to seek professional help, writes CLIFF SAUNDERS of Northcliff

The tragedy of the young Pretoria lad, Rick Horn, whose last words on Facebook before committing suicide were "life is a bitch and then you die", reminded me of a colleague and friend who was known to often use that mentally and emotionally destructive expression. He was found hanging from a tree.

Shakespeare's Hamlet, who suffered from melancholia, expressed the sentiment more elo-

quently: "How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me the workings of this world. It is an unweeded garden and things rank and gross in nature possess it merely."

Psychologists inform us that depression is a "disease" afflicting an increasing number of people. It is our duty to identify such people and do everything possible to persuade them to seek psychiatric help – which often works wonders.

Two other good friends and col-

leagues working in the often-depressing "news environment" have also committed suicide – and as the poet wrote: "Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

Sure the world "sucks". However, if it didn't we'd all fall off!

Some years ago a friend fell asleep behind the wheel and rolled his car, as the sun was rising. After crawling out of the window, he said: "Oh, what a beautiful morning this is!"

That's the spirit!

QUOTES

“... from that moment onwards, the impossible rapidly morphed into the inevitable.”

Andrew Miller
(The Cricinfo correspondent who covered the West Indies defeat of England at the weekend, on the game after Kevin Pietersen had his stump blown out by a full-length leg cutter.)