

# It's time for all South Africans to make demands of their leaders

Gerald Shaw

SOUTH AFRICA is in a crisis of leadership, with the governing ANC alliance paralysed by a divisive scramble for access to public resources, with issues of ideology and the huge poverty gap in the background as corruption and fraud devour the country's wealth.

The prolonged strike of public servants, including teachers and nurses, has added to the general malaise as Cosatu flexes its muscles to press for a decisive move to the left.

The National General Council of the ANC, to take place on September 20 to 24, is to discuss a document on leadership that addresses the situation with remarkable frankness, going back to the 1990s and quoting

ANC documents which identified disturbing trends of "careerism, corruption and opportunism" taking root at various levels at an early stage. And not much has been done to eradicate this toxic mixture, as the document readily admits.

There is a public perception that the ANC is at war with itself and that its leadership has lost the moral high ground. There is a lack of political will, we conclude, or the epidemic is simply out of control.

There is much else that needs radical reform. "Cadre deployment" of ANC loyalists has caused a breakdown in service delivery. Maladministration and sheer incapacity underline the need for a professional, non-partisan civil service. The ANC's traditional non-racialism is undermined.

President Jacob Zuma, weak and indecisive, is himself a major part of the problem – for reasons that are apparent. As his political enemies plan their strategy to get rid of him, he is unlikely to be asked to serve a second term, even if he survives to 2012 when his first term ends. Yet he is a wily and resourceful politician and will not give up without a fight.

In the ensuing turmoil, can the ANC recover its moral authority and steer the country out of the morass? The rot of corruption and crony capitalism is far advanced. Cosatu has lost patience with Zuma and seems resolved to take over the ANC and clean up the mess itself, moving the country to the left.

The underlying tension about economic policies may be in the background for the moment but, as

the strike has demonstrated, there is anger and impatience with a style of leadership that trumpets the rhetoric of the "National Democratic Revolution" while resolutely practising neo-liberal economic policies that serve to make the rich richer and the poor not much better off.

If anger and disillusion with the government are so widespread among the unionised workers who have jobs, we can only guess at the mood among the millions of unemployed youth and others in the vast informal settlements around our cities. Any leader who is going to make a real impact and begin to repair the damage will need patience and exceptional gifts of leadership.

South Africa has produced such leaders in the past and, we may

hope, will do so again. A leader who is to wield the necessary authority should have strong moral convictions and the gravitas that inspires confidence and respect.

Such a leader was Chief Albert Luthuli, probably the most notable ANC leader apart from President Nelson Mandela. Luthuli laid the foundations for liberation. He was committed to non-violent resistance, leading the ANC into the 1952 Defiance of Unjust Laws campaign. But the government's increasingly repressive response dashed any hope that liberation could be won by non-violence.

Luthuli seems to have eventually acquiesced in armed struggle, but insisted that it be conducted by an organisation separate from the ANC, as MK became. His whole life

in the ANC had been dedicated to reconciliation between white and black. He was potentially a great national leader but was denied such a role by apartheid, banned and confined to a small area of KwaZulu-Natal. Yet his stature was internationally recognised when he was awarded the Nobel prize for peace, the first South African to be so honoured.

Luthuli's autobiography *Let My People Go* has been re-published with an introduction by Kader Asmal. As Asmal notes, Luthuli was a man of extraordinary generosity of spirit with deeply held Christian beliefs.

He had articulated the ANC's non-racial policies with the same deep conviction that he vested in his religion. But South Africa's history

suggests that great leadership is not always enough, as when historic fears and resentments bedevil inter-group relations.

In the present situation, even outstanding leadership will avail little until the population at large bestir themselves to demand rectitude from their leaders and support those visionary leaders who are clearly more concerned with upholding the constitution and advancing the public good than feathering their own nests. As things stand, the situation is volatile and unpredictable.

Ultimately it is for individual South Africans in all communities to stand up and demand what is right.

● *Shaw is a former assistant editor of the Cape Times.*

## HOUSING POLICY

# Let's talk about an alternative to what there is

Paul Hendler

GOVERNMENT'S stated intention is to create sustainable human settlements for all. In reality most South Africans live in remote informal settlements and what are still largely underserviced urban dormitories. Why have long-standing apartheid spatial patterns persisted, 16 years after the advent of democracy? What could prompt real change towards the development of sustainable settlements?

The official policy, Breaking New Ground (BNG), is not simply to house the people but more importantly to create an enabling environment for "sustainable and integrated human settlements".

The Western Cape Sustainable Human Settlements Strategy (also known as Isidima) similarly purports to advance the creation of settlements that are economically and ecologically sustainable and which represent a state and space of identity within which all residents in the Western Cape can live meaningful lives.

Both BNG and Isidima aim to reverse the effect of apartheid planning, ie segregated, dormitory townships. In this context does the Western Cape government's site-and-service housing policy represent an advance to sustainable settlements, or a retreat to apartheid toilets-in-the-veld?

I have recently been involved in assisting the municipalities of George, Hermanus, Kimberley, Knysna, Paarl, Saldanha and Stellenbosch, to draw up sustainable human settlement plans (HSPs), a statutory requirement. What struck me is the extent to which mainly poorer black residents of these places still live in segregated townships, many in the squalor of shanty structures, while the richer minority continue to live on the other side of the proverbial railway track, close to the centre of business and amenities.

Why is it that the government was willing and able expeditiously to fund massive infrastructure investments for the World Cup, but appears incapable of doing, or unwilling to do, the same in order to lay the basis for the type of settlements promoted in BNG and Isidima?

To answer this question we need to dig deeper than the popular descriptions "developmental state" and "mixed, market-based economy".

In practice our "free market economy" is traversed with social inequities resulting in class conflict.

The power imbalances between the dominant and dominated classes at all levels is reflected in the very structures that make up the so-called developmental state.

Moeletsi Mbeki (*Architects of Poverty*, 2009) and Sampie Terreblanche (*A History of Inequality in South Africa 1652-2002*, 2002) have



TIN ICE: The poor are still living in sterile communities like Blikkiesdorp, above, even nearly 20 years into democracy.

Picture: MICHAEL WALKER

## There is not yet a significantly powerful and widespread urban social movement and mass consciousness

pointed out that the democratic SA state was formed out of intense lobbying by capital during the late 1980s and early 1990s: the "Mineral Energy Complex" – comprised of the mining industry, and its associated chemical and engineering industries and finance – was hegemonic among other factions of capital in negotiating a compromise with the ANC leadership at the negotiations at Codrus. What followed is the favoured *laissez faire* economic policy of the complex.

South Africa, under an ANC government, opened up its markets to international competition. This became the basis of the deindustrialisation of South Africa's economy, with concomitant job losses and ensuing unemployment and impoverishment. So, instead of a developmental state, we should talk of a state that is subject to different class forces (represented by, *inter alia*, Cosatu and organised labour, big business, the emerging black bourgeoisie, including the "tenderpreneurs", etc) and the changing policies and strategies adopted by the state that reflect the shifting balance of opposing class forces.

Judging by the living conditions of most working class people in South Africa, their influence has waned. South African society is characterised by enclaves of first world development located within a steadily expanding sea of poverty

and growing social inequity. The dominated classes (70 percent of the population) live outside the walls of the gated upper and middle class communities, in degraded environments worlds apart from the modern SA that hosted the World Cup.

National government formulated and implemented the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) macro-economic policy that is part of the problem underlying the segregated and degraded living places for the majority. Municipalities are required by law to implement sustainable human settlement plans, within a context of national policies that undermine the very intervention that is necessary to achieve these.

Sustainable housing means development that happens within certain limits: firstly, decent housing that households from lower-income communities can actually afford; secondly, development that does not degrade the environment to the extent of putting future generations at risk; thirdly, development that happens within an acceptable carbon footprint; and, fourthly, development that draws on renewable resources (particularly in respect of energy).

BNG and Isidima have set themselves the challenge to shape the housing market to deliver equitably within these four limits. These are limits to growth economies: they



imply a no-growth (or steady state) economy, which is the opposite of what we have, namely, a debt-funded growth economy, with which the precepts of Gear are consistent.

The near collapse of the global economy in 2008, triggered by the US sub-prime mortgage crisis, demonstrated the limits to debt-funded growth. The greater majority of South Africans are simply not bankable to the extent required for mortgage finance. While this "prudent lending" has been hailed as a strength of the SA banking sector, it excludes the majority from participating in economic prosperity through gearing housing assets.

As high land prices in well-located areas make private housing unaffordable for the majority, local governments need to make direct interventions to enable affordable housing for poorer communities on well-located land (i.e. not land on the peripheries of Khayelitsha). However, including affordable housing within the middle and upper income development markets will almost certainly depress these markets. Likewise, municipalities depend on rising secondary housing markets to expand their rates base, and thereby

to sustain themselves financially. Suburban homeowners and municipalities have a vested interest in resisting integrated settlements.

These interests are well illustrated in the case of Stellenbosch, where overcrowding from Khayamandi spill over into an informal settlement on the slopes of the Papegaaiberg just adjacent to the town's industrial area, Plankenbrug, during 2002.

The location of settlement is favourable in terms of access to the industrial area (and work) and from there to other amenities of the town. Therefore, subdividing and servicing the stands of these occupiers, transferring tenure to them, and providing technical and financial support for them to consolidate their structures, could empower them, in ways reminiscent of John Turner's (*Housing as a Verb*, 1972) vision of the empowering effect of self-help housing.

Several months ago, DA councillors Benninghoff Gilioeme and Johannes Serdyn told a meeting of suburban homeowners, at which I was present, that the informal settlers on the Papegaaiberg could not be accepted because they had occu-

pled the land illegally and were opposition (read ANC) supporters anyway. The DA's constituency in Stellenbosch and other Western Cape towns where they hold sway, would like to retreat into gated communities rather than welcome a non-racial, inclusive society.

The new site-and-service policy announced recently by the DA provincial government is therefore more likely to perpetuate unsustainable, peripheral settlements, albeit serviced, than well-located self-help projects. As such the implementation of this policy is likely to result in the orderly urbanisation envisaged by the PW Botha administration during the 1980s when it tried to reform apartheid, using housing as the cutting edge of the strategy.

Ironically this will happen under the banner of "restructuring the apartheid landscape".

Where is the social force likely to come from to drive the required transformation? The reactionary tendency of established housing classes, and the conquest of local public institutions and authorities by powerful private financial and development interests – using emerging BE elites as their proxies – suggests a politics of the grassroots, where urban social movements emerge to address the obstacles to transformation posed by a developer-local municipality-established homeowner classes complex as well as the constricting macro policies of the state.

The role of the independent trade union and community movements in South Africa's transformation during the 1970s and 1980s is an example of how independent, grassroots, democratically-controlled

urban social movements can become vehicles to fight for macro and local policies required to effect urban transformation and begin restructuring existing space economies.

There also needs to be an industrial strategy that encourages and protects local manufacturing as well as a different local government funding model.

The urban social movement in South Africa is at a nadir now compared to the heady days of the late-1970s and throughout the 1980s, a time when there was real potential for a transformative urban agenda. Grassroots structures are emerging vis a vis the service delivery protests, but the electorate generally still seems to view the ANC-as-government as the vehicle to deliver on their aspirations.

There is therefore not yet a significantly powerful and widespread urban social movement and mass consciousness that can have the effects required on the government's macro policies and state programmes at the local level. Nevertheless the seeds of a strategic awareness are being planted by organisations like the Federation of the Urban Poor (FedUp) and abahlali Base Mjondolo (both shack dwellers' organisations).

Progressive professionals interested in pro-poor reforms should consider ways of debating an alternative to the status quo.

This conversation cannot however happen in a voluntarist way: professionals individually and collectively reflect the broader social division of labour in our society, and many of us will continue to perform functions for public sector clients that objectively serve the interests of the dominant classes without being perturbed; those of us who are conscious of and live the contradiction between our ideal of a pro-poor city and our objective functions in professional work, neither individually nor collectively have the power to effect the significant political changes required to make sustainable human settlements not only possible but also likely to happen.

Ours is a role of encouraging debate, planting ideas and being available to support the birth as well as the autonomy of emerging social movements.

● *Dr Hendler is an independent development analyst and practitioner who advises on urban development and affordable housing and development finance.*

*This is part of a National Dialogue initiative launched in March by the Ministry of Economic Development in association with the Cape Times and the SA New Economics Network. Copies of earlier contributions to the dialogue can be found via the SANE website, [www.sane.org.za](http://www.sane.org.za)*

*To contribute to the series, email [creditor@inl.co.za](mailto:creditor@inl.co.za). Contributions should not exceed 1600 words.*

# 'Father William' – watching as a hideous prophecy comes true

THE great Victorian political oracle Lewis Carroll once scribbled a poem about Father William, who, though very old, very fat and rather wobbly, balanced an eel on the end of his nose.

Everyone wanted to know: "Do you think at your age it is right?" Father William's response? "Be off or I'll kick you downstairs!"

What baffles me is how Mr Carroll could have peered through the fogs and mists of the aeons that lay ahead – and there, like a blob of butter cascading over a warm piece of waffle, clearly seen the endgame of our own Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, quaking in his sandbagged

In a State  
peter wilhelm



teepee on the front lawn of the Union Buildings with his presidential guard of squaws, all in the family way. But still balancing an eel... and awaiting the judgment of his peers and his pawpaws (elucidated by the Urban Dictionary as "grumpy and pissy").

As we know, these pawpaws are led by JubeJube Malema – the fragrant Youth League metrosexual who says you must treat your tempo-

rary bedmates kindly, sending them home in the morning with taxi fare and a mouldy crust of bread to nibble on the way.

Since the *grootkokedore* of the ANC set up plans to meet this month for a rare National General Council – R24 000 each please, delegates, in a brown envelope – JubeJube has been heckling Zuma, whose toes he was once ready to suck until he died of esophageal constriction.

What do these Young Turks want? Disentangling their mewling and puking, it seems they will clamour for the following (in no particular order):

● Nationalisation of the mines,

followed by state control of hairdressers.

● Seizure of all private assets, including my old Led Zeppelin LPs.

● Closer ties with Zimbabwe and Libya. A referendum on how MooMoo Quaddafi/Gaddafi/Khaddafy/Gadhafi's name must (by law) be spelt, with provision for endorsements in your fraudulent driver's licence for failing to comply.

● Sanctuary for Kim Jong-il and the rest of the North Korean football team.

● The swift inauguration of a Media Tribunal to behead editors of existing newspapers and send their staff for reorientation classes to the

New Age daily before its unsold copies are appropriated by the poor and used in informal housing.

● A revision of the colonial calendar, so that the year 2012 – or whenever Zuma is sent back to his ancestral Holiday Inn – JubeJube or his companionable fruits can get a good start in Year Zero watching Zulu maidens do the Reed Dance in pink polka-dot pyjamas to cloak their huge bums. This will accord with the new national slogan, "Cover it all up!"

Other demands may be ratcheting apace – it's hard to tell when dealing with pawpaws. Another thing hard to discern is why our

own leading political pundits are suddenly taking JubeJube seriously – insisting that he touches on issues warm to the cockles of ANC hearts, whereas before they said his arse would flop out of his pantaloons as he grew too bulky for them.

Caught as they are between the Scylla of Malema and the Charybdis of Zuma, the notion is growing that a third candidate might be found. He is of course Kgalema Motlanthe.

You could argue that Motlanthe knows not whether he is Arthur or Martha. Dig around in his early doings and sayings and you could be forgiven for wondering whether he ever held a view that was not just as

infinitely malleable. If you refer to those important policy power-points above, Kgalema's public burbles have pretty much given vibrant throat to them all – or their opposite.

A cynic might add that it depended on who was in power: Is nationalisation, after all, ANC policy? Is Aids caused by 57 varieties of puppy drool? You will find all positions covered by the grey-bearded one.

Peel your eyeballs for his ascent, the first sign of which could be his portrait on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* with his arm draped around Naomi Campbell or; it could even be, Vanessa Rapphaely.