

POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

BY GWEN LISTER



I MAY be justifiably accused of hammering away at the issue of Namibian 'kings' but I am puzzled to say the least, why neither the Government nor the ruling party are condemning what appears to be a sudden and inexplicable revival of tribalism. If Namibia were a country of kings then it would be a monarchy and not a republic. It's time to decide whether we are in favour of a united Namibia or not - after all, we can't have it both ways.

In a column a few weeks ago, I challenged the ruling party to say where it stood on the question of 'kings'. There appears to be more than ample evidence that certain high-ranking leaders of the party are actively supporting the Kwanyama 'kingdom', but the party has thus far failed to confirm or deny. Since then Justus Garoëb has been installed 'king' of the Damaras, wherever they may be in Namibia, although this is under dispute. All in all, the 'king' factor, for some inexplicable reason, is gaining momentum.

Because of the countrywide local government and regional elections, there is hardly a role for the chiefs anymore, let alone kings. So what do these monarchies hope to achieve and where will they fit in? They will want power, they will want land, they will want people to rule over and our Constitution makes no provision for this. It does provide for an (advisory) council of traditional leaders, and we expect it will be debated in the next session of Parliament. The report on traditional leaders, compiled by Jariretendu Kozonguizi, will also undoubtedly be discussed in this context.

It is clear that the role and mandate of regional councils themselves is fairly negligible in the national sense, so how can we hope to find a role for chiefs and kings and where will they all be accommodated, without giving unnecessary credence to ethnicity and tribalism? This, however, is up to Parliament to debate, and one can only hope they will rather err on the side of national unity than tribalism.

Under apartheid, as I can recall, there was no particular aspiration towards kingdoms. In fact the colonial government was roundly condemned for its divide-and-rule tactics - rightly so. But now several groups in Namibia want to take it one step further - ethnic governments weren't good enough; now they want to have kings and kingdoms. It is an absolute anomaly under our Constitution, and I fail to understand why either the ruling party or Government express themselves on this worrying tendency.

Perhaps there is a recognition that there is no work for traditional leaders, and so we attempt to cover it up with some sort of respect for 'kings'. We perpetuate ethnicity and tribalism to make the leaders feel good, simply because we have nothing else to offer them. But this will not be a solution in the long run.

Where will we draw the line? What is therefore to stop Hans Diergaardt, for instance, from doing the same? It is usual practice for example, for a king or queen to rule a country, and not areas or ethnic groups. The President of the Republic of Namibia, I believe, has superseded the concept of 'kings' or 'queens'.

We must also bear in mind that the constitution specifically prohibits the delimitation of the country into ethnic areas. Once again, this contradicts with the 'king-thing'.

Regional governors have already usurped the chiefs in most areas. The only solution I can see is that the 'chiefs' and 'kings' or whatever they call themselves, simply contest regional elections and take their place on the Council. In terms of the Bill of Fundamental Rights, the people of this country have a right to their tradition and culture, but to take this as the green light

Peace at last

PEACE has descended upon Windhoek West once again. The students celebrated their 'cultural' festival and residents were powerless to defend themselves from the onslaught.

In case one is accused of exaggeration, I am talking about four nights (I fell asleep by 3am) of disco music blasting over the entire area - every syllable of every song trespassed closed windows, locks doors, earplugs - right into the furthest crevice of one's bedroom.

The police were also powerless to restore peace because Vice-Chancellor Peter Katjavivi and Dean Kandetu "had given their permission". A comment from the Minister of Home Affairs would be appreciated on this point. Since when can two individuals muzzle the police force from defending peace-abiding citizens?

A strange state of affairs - Vice Chancellor Katjavivi and Dean Kandetu held control over the police and the Windhoek West taxpayers, rate-payers, rent-payers - those mere mortals who have to work for a living.

The two University chiefs were indifferent to residents' direct appeals as well as police warnings after the first night's assault. This could be due to several reasons, all worrying:

- perhaps they had in fact lost control;
- or perhaps they were trying to ingratiate themselves with the students? Very cheap!
- perhaps they considered it an important lesson in democracy for the future leaders of our country. Those privileged students are more entitled to rights than workers.

Considering this was not the first rowdy campus rumpus and thanks to the two liberal university heads, it will obviously not be the last, perhaps Windhoek West rate-payers should demand a reduction in rates due to a consequent depreciation of property in the area.

EXHAUSTED
WINDHOEK WEST

Telecom

Letters to the Editor

formation on why this was done or how much longer I was supposed to wait.

A few days later I had Mr Ferdinand Tjombe on my doorstep apologising. Some mistake had occurred with Telecom and therefore the company had not supplied me with a telephone.

Already a couple of weeks later I had a telephone installed in my house and I am told several other people in the same neighbourhood as well. Furthermore, I was told that in the future the people working at Telecom would do everything in their power to ensure that things like that would not happen again.

I use this opportunity to thank Telecom most wholeheartedly for their service. I hope that they can manage the planned improvements and people will be happy with their service. For those who are not, I can only say contact Mr Tjombe, who has a most sympathetic manner and will do anything in his power for you.

DORA
STEFANS DOTTIR
WINDHOEK

UNAM rumpus

I WISH to commend the considerate behaviour of staff and student organisers during the recent Unam city campus Cultural Festival. These staff and students were promoting reconciliation through sharing this culture with other people living within a 3-4 km radius. Other Namibians such as University management, living in outlying suburbs and rural districts, were not so fortunate.

Residents who complained of noise at 2am need to be made to realise the importance of such festivals. Firstly, they express tradition and identity via western, amplified technology. They also boost the national economy,

thoughtfully providing free culture. Such festivals also attempt to promote the credibility of certain Unam staff.

Furthermore, uptight residents over-estimate the psychological effects of sleep deprivation. Surely a family who rises at 6am to take children to school then work at responsible jobs (doctors operating, pilots flying etc) do not need more than four hours sleep? As for the elderly, who claim to have been disturbed, they, like students can sleep all day. Indeed, few students attended their early morning classes. Some who did, fell asleep.

I suggest that residents emulate this fine example of civil responsibility and hold another cultural festival in late October. This could take the form of a 2am disco, held in the streets surrounding the student residences. Hopefully, despite examination commitments, the students might be able to patronise this nation-building event.

Potential donors in the area, impressed by the cultural festival and encouraged to donate generously to deplete Unam coffers, might also consider sponsoring the Windhoek West Cultural Festival.

CULTURE VULTURE
WINDHOEK

Agreement, but ...

I WOULD like to reply to S Hipondoka's letter as published in The Namibian of September 10 under the heading 'Unam defence'.

I agree that there is something wrong with the tone of C Coetzee. Would he refer to F W de Klerk as Naziist in the same way he calls Mr R Jacobs 'Castaite'? I suspect he is following the racist trend which is becoming 'en vogue' in the western press in referring to anything relative to Africa in negative terms (the Warlord

probably have been defending the racists actions of the Academy too under the adage: the ones in power are always right. To claim that criticism on leading figures is something from Europe is not only insulting to Africa, it is also plain wrong.

I know plenty of people in Europe who followed their leaders slavishly (think about the 2nd World War) and equally many in Africa who criticised their chiefs (think about the many Owambo and Herero people who left the Riruakos and the likes for their true future).

To say that the bulk of the people involved in the University agree or disagree with Coetzee's statements is impossible. So far, the only public reactions have been Kandetu's statements defending his boss and some individuals' and Nantu's attack on Katjavivi.

Hipondoka clearly doesn't seem to see the difference between sabotaging and criticising with the aim of improving an institution going the wrong way.

I've never spoken to C Coetzee about the University but clearly a lot is going wrong there. After a year of operation there is still no senate and non-secretive salary structure (a common practice in any self-respecting university) including transparency in fees paid to consultants resulting in frustration of the remaining lecturing staff.

Arguing that criticising your employer is tantamount to dishonour, is equating trade unionism to treachery. Come on Hipondoka, are you still living in the Middle Ages or have you never heard of the achievements of unions both in capitalist and other societies?

I also take exception to the accusation of lobbying students of all the academics I know at the University. I don't know of any involving his/her

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