

Perhaps Tjivikua Needs A Jet?

THE recent accusations of extravagance levelled at the Management of the Polytechnic under its Rector, Dr Tjama Tjivikua, are proof that taxpayers' money talks. And when it does, everybody is bound to sit down and listen. Sit down, not stand up and muzzle it. And listen, not sit up and scold it.

Sadly enough, the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates appear intent to do just that: stand up and attempt to muzzle it; sit up and attempt to scold it. May somebody remind them that they can't possibly do that without hurting themselves profoundly; without calling upon themselves a significant amount of public contempt; without damaging considerably the reputation that they are, ironically, so eager to protect and build.

We, in the SRC leadership, understand the feelings of the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates after unidentified sources within the Polytechnic dealt on them, by surprise, that crushing blow. We regret the boldness of those unidentified sources, but don't condemn it. One reason being that when caught in a dilemma we decided to give preference to the feelings of the students, whom we legitimately represent, and those of their parents, the major taxpayers for that matter. We, thus, apologise for our duty consciousness, but are not prepared to compromise it.

We, in the SRC leadership, appreciate that after all the undisputed truths that have been said and written, it became imperative for the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates to set forth a face-saving campaign. It is just that the strategy adopted to carry out that intent was not the most fortunate. May we suggest that a better face-saver would be to come out clean and apologise publicly to the taxpayers.

Another option, though less ennobling, would be perhaps to swallow ungrudgingly the "bitter pills" of constructive criticism.

Judging from the

(un)soundness of the arguments invoked to establish their case, the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates might have been in a state of great shock indeed, as confessed by Manfred Kavetu. Most probably, not only shock but also confusion.

We shall proceed by referring first to The Namibian article "Tjivikua on Attack," of the April 7 1998. If there was any 'attack' whatsoever by Tjivikua, that doesn't seem to have been very fortunate either. To make matters worse, such an 'attack' was directed against the wrong foe: The Namibian newspaper.

In the said article Tjivikua goes to great lengths to angrily accuse The Namibian of writing "nonsensical journalistic chaff". Surprisingly, he leaves the readers wondering what he means by that. Instead of substantiating his accusations against the Newspaper, Tjivikua proceeds by giving forth (un)convincing reasons to (un)justify his flight to Oshakati on a chartered plane. In so doing, Tjivikua unwittingly establishes the opposite of his initial claim. In other words, Tjivikua unwittingly establishes that the referred writings of The Namibian are anything but "nonsensical journalistic chaff" thus leaving his initial claim begging.

By implication, the said writings of the Namibian remain undisputed facts, furnished as they were by well-informed, and yet unidentified, sources from within the Polytechnic.

In the letter "In Defence of the Polytech's Tjivikua" featuring in The Namibian edition of Thursday, April, 9 1998, Stephen Schultz repeats, with astonishing mimicry, Tjivikua's argumentative pattern. Schultz begins by accusing rather harshly The Namibian of poor journalistic standards on the grounds of its alleged failure to "investigate the allegations before publishing them". After thus raising the interest of the reader, Schultz, instead of furnishing his own 'in-

vestigated set of facts' proceeds by naively feeding upon, maliciously twisting and cunningly misrepresenting the very same 'facts' published by The Namibian. It, thus, becomes clear to the reader that if there was anyone who, in the first place, failed to investigate any 'facts' it was not The Namibian. It was certainly Stephen Schultz, the venerable lecturer of law.

Finally we come to Manfred Kavetu's letter "SRC Conduct Causes Shock", that featured in The Namibian of April, 9 1998. There, with great boldness, Kavetu submits that the N\$8000 was well spent. Really? If 'flying high' to Oshakati was the best and cheapest alternative available, why is it that Tjivikua and his associates don't sell the Polytechnic's luxury cars to buy a "Rectorship" jet? That would eliminate the inconvenience of having

to charter planes whenever he and his associates want to fly anywhere else - not only to Oshakati. More importantly, and reciting Tjivikua's own words, that would enable the institution to gain even more staff hours and further increase productivity and efficiency. Let the taxpayers judge by themselves the soundness of that reasoning.

Further down, Kavetu accuses the Polytechnic SRC of having a record of dishonourable, disrespectful, and tribally motivated conduct against the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates. We wonder how much does Kavetu know about the Polytechnic of Namibia and its SRC. Not very much, we suspect.

Our suspicions are further strengthened by Kavetu's emotional appeals coupled by desperate attempts to drag in other far-fetched issues. These awkward moves

only earn him the embarrassment of sounding confused, irrelevant and undisciplined.

In his article, Kavetu places too much emphasis on respect, but leaves the reader wondering whether he fully understands what it entails. The informed reader will certainly recall that respect and recognition of the value of the human person are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. So, they are prerogatives ascribed to all human beings regardless of whether they are Presidents, Chancellors or Rectors. Is Kavetu trying to suggest any special arrangements for the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates?

Besides, being a President, Chancellor or Rector does not exempt anyone from constructive criticism - at least, not in any democratic country that we know of. Even a leader of the size of Nel-

son Mandela is not immune from the bitterest criticism of the media in South Africa and elsewhere. Does Kavetu entertain any intention to suggest that the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates are any greater than Mandela?

To make his case even worse, Kavetu's attempts to identify constructive criticism with disrespect only serve to expose his sheer (mis)understanding of the concepts involved. Why doesn't he spend a few more hours browsing through the Concise Oxford Dictionary, or whichever he may choose?

As student leaders, we also take a great deal of criticism on the part of the very students whom we represent. But we read nothing personal into that. We take it as feedback, as a sign of students' involvement with their student government. The inability of the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associ-

ates to take any criticism raises suspicions among the students that the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates haven't yet renounced their initial dictatorship approach.

When it comes to the decisions of the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates which affect the students of the Polytechnic, we can understand that Manfred Kavetu may have nothing to criticise. Probably because of his sympathies to the Polytech's Tjivikua and his associates. Or probably because his involvement with the Polytechnic Students is relatively distant or minimal. That, unfortunately, is not the case with the Polytechnic SRC. Therefore we strongly suggest that Mr. Kavetu performs his own duties and leave us alone to perform ours.

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