

A case of de-naai-al

Dear Com

Been thinking seriously, like everyone else, what is it about HIV/AIDS that President Mbeki can't get right? Surely the man is intelligent, surely he knows that his interpretation is not worth an old Union flag against the medical brains of almost the entire planet? Surely he knows that most of those medical boffins and hospital staff who disagree with him are not in the pockets of the creeps in the pharmaceutical industry. Mostly they are hard working public servants like him but are alarmed at the numbers of patients they see who are dying?

So we ask ourselves, every single day. What makes him click his mouse with the crackpots?

Dear Com

Been thinking about the President and HIV/AIDS. There is only one explanation that makes any sense to me Com. Is the President in a state of acute denial? For some reason, he just refuses to see the same reality as millions of other people, and wishes the problem away. By stating, as he does all the time, that the link between HIV and AIDS is not proven, and that other factors like poverty are to blame, then the problem of AIDS no longer exists!

But what does this mean, isn't this just an intellectual exercise? Hey Com I wish it was! But how are people going to take

Another series of irreverent postcards from our intrepid correspondent... This time turning an acerbic eye on the HIV/AIDS fiasco.

the cool campaigns by Love Life and others seriously if the Head of State says they have got it wrong? And what does it mean for major policies for the future of the country if the Head of State says people are exaggerating the impact of the virus?

His denial of a looming catastrophe could mean that the whole economic and social policy of government will not take into account what will be needed to care for the victims of HIV/AIDS and their dependants. It's no wonder I can't sleep at night. I wonder if the President can?

Dear Com

This denial thing has really got me. How can you justify spending on the arms deal when scrapping it could save millions of lives? How can you justify the top salaries of senior government aparatchiks, who tolerate the endemic corruption and cronyism that accompanies such deals and those associated with global privatisation?

The Man is in serious denial Com.

Been reading a bit of psychology. Do you know what goes with denial? I'll tell you. Blame. You blame others for the mess we are in. Blame the drug companies, blame the CIA, blame the liberals, blame the ultraleft counter-revolutionaries in Cosatu (whatever that means!). Why not blame the person in the moon too!

Then I ask myself. Why are we all trying to fathom out what it is that stops the guy from saying, 'Sorry Coms, got this wrong. Let's work together to sort it out'? Why?

It bit me like a bolt of lightning! You can't make any sense out of his position because it is not rational. We are all trying to work it out rationally. We read and re-read the speeches, and the papers. We listen for clues and nuances we may have missed. But it just doesn't make any sense.

Listen Com Thabo is in a jam, and rather than admit the truth, even in the face of criticism from Madiba, our President prefers to carry on courting the crackpots, and denying what is happening on the ground, and sadly, the numbers of people who are being put in the ground by their bereaved loved ones.

Makes me want to weep Com. Then I remember that old socialist slogan: 'Don't mourn. Organise!'

Dear Com

Talking about Madiba. Isn't this typical of the man. He goes into a briefing meeting with Thabo and a few other guys to 'clarify' the government's position on HIV/AIDS. Hey! If Madiba doesn't understand it, how can the masses!

After an hour or two the big man comes out, and says that the real trouble is that the little man doesn't know how to communicate the government's message. That he will now stay quiet (ish) on the issue while Essop and the

backroom boys including Comrade Peter Mokaba, get their act together. Some of us groan. We need Madiba to speak out. Who else in the ANC leadership does?

Dear Com

OK Com I agree, it looks a bit like a stitch up to save the face of the ANC. But Com, if there is one thing that separates Madiba from the others, is that he can admit mistakes when he gets things wrong, like he did on Bush's so-called anti-terrorism war. You can't write Madiba off just yet!

So here is the plan. Madiba is to stay quiet while Thabo (discreetly) distances himself from the views of the crackpots. Thabo then Zuma's off to the Commonwealth but under questioning from the press backs, can't resist blabbing on again about the unproven connection between HIV and AIDS.

Back home, the old timer's gloves come off. Madiba bits back by saying the President must have many other pressing concerns on his plate, and that the HIV/AIDS issue should now be left up to Baby Jake Zuma. That the key issue now is to roll out the drugs and relocate the ANC on to the side of the people.

Meanwhile, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), backed up by Cosatu, takes the government to the cleaners for a second time, and even loyalists like Sam the Man break ranks and decide to act like an elected government that values its electorate. Things are not looking too good for Thabo.

What's interesting is that the government doesn't go to court on the claims of Thabo's eccentric cyber-buddies, but on whether the courts can constitutionally tell government what it must try to deliver. Seems even the legal guys representing government know that Thabo's denial fixation wouldn't stand up in court, and instead built up a case which

has holes blown right through the middle of it by the likes of Sam. This denial thing is a costly business Com!

Dear Com

Heard that at the recent Cosatu/ANC ten a side, another file was tabled for limited eyes only, repeating the claims of the crackpots. I hear the Cosatu coms were polite, but made it clear they were not impressed. When thousands of members are dying, and the cemeteries are filling up with precious comrades who should be helping to build a new society, it's hard to get excited about a bundle of ideas that would be the laughing stock of the world's scientific community, if they weren't so damn tragic.

Made me think Com. The ANC's electoral base is looking a bit shaky. Membership has sunk. Branches don't meet, and few union comrades give their organising muscle any more. The ANC might not lose an election, but it is in danger of becoming a party without any mass base. Maybe that's the plan! Stop all those irritating demands from below for proper services and jobs. All of a sudden the Freedom Charter starts to look like an ultra-left counter-revolutionary plot! I need a Panado Com!

Dear Com

Heard the rumour that when Minister Manto retires, she is going to join the circus as a trapeze artist. Never seen anyone walk a political tightrope and do policy somersaults like that! Hope the safety net is in place!

But what is really bugging those of us on the ground is this. Why are the



Cabinet and the coms in the ANC NEC staying so silent in the face of this shocking catastrophe?

Let me put it this way Com. Would you entrust the running of the country to any second hand Cabinet Minister or ANC NEC member who wasn't prepared to make a stand on this issue?

I have just realised something. The thing about denial and careerism is that they are very infectious, and I'm not sure they are curable. Maybe Thabo could give some thought to that for a change!

Hey Com! Have you noticed? The only ones in the unions who side with the Presidents office are those incurably ambitious few who want a place inside it, and they don't have any credibility whatsoever. What would we do without the trade union movement to keep us all sane! Viva Cosatu Viva!