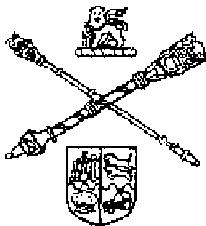


PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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18 February 2005

The Democratic Alliance

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The Honourable T Manuel

Minister of Finance
National Assembly
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Dear Trevor

Thank you for your letter dated 16 February 2005.

Indeed you are correct when you say we have "*differences of belief*".

Certainly sport sits close to one's emotional core, and those differences are perhaps exaggerated further than they might be had we been discussing economic policy or labour legislation.

Nevertheless I wholeheartedly respect your right to disagree with the argument I put forward on Tuesday.

There can be no better forum than South Africa's Parliament to air opposing views and opinions - for debate is the lifeblood of democratic discourse - and I appreciate the time you took to share your considered views with me.

Allow me then to respond to your letter in the same spirit in which you wrote to me.

As I understand you, you make two points.

First, you suggest that the ANC's program of transformation serves a particular purpose with regard to South African sport – “*to level the playing field*” and to correct what you refer to as an “*inter-generational*” disadvantage, whereby “*the sons and daughters of those who have had privilege*” represent “*all of us*”.

You argue that “*Most South Africans, including virtually every sports administrator, with a few notable exceptions, like Clive Rice, believe that we must attain the Constitutional imperative of representivity soonest*”.

To achieve this, you say it is logical that “*some determined action*” – by which I assume you mean transformation or in more practical terms, a quota system – is necessary.

Second, you take issue with the comparison I drew in my speech between Basil D'Olivera and Kevin Pietersen, and the argument that both players left South Africa because they felt they could not reach their full potential within South Africa's respective political environments.

You argue this comparison is disingenuous – in fact you refer to it as a historical “*distortion*” which amounts to the “*abuse of the heroes of South Africa*” – because transformation (the reason Pietersen left) cannot be equated with apartheid (the reason D'Olivera left) and to do so, you argue, is quite simply “*wrong*”.

Let me respond to each point in turn.

I too am familiar with South Africa's Constitution. But my understanding of the values and imperatives it embodies differs from yours.

I understand South Africa's Constitution to provide for and encapsulate the freedom, opportunity and equality that is guaranteed to each and every South African, irrespective of his or her race.

While the African National Congress boasts many internal party documents which call for ‘demographic representivity’ and ‘transformation’, to the best of my knowledge neither of these phrases appears in the South African Constitution. (In fact, the word “representivity” does not even appear in the dictionary.)

While the Constitution does provide for redress, both these phrases are the invention and property of the ANC, and both stand in stark contrast to the ideals embodied in our Constitution.

For where the Constitution places each South African on an equal footing – it ‘levels the playing fields’ as you might say - the ANC's program of transformation does quite the opposite.

In practical terms, when the rhetoric is stripped away, transformation amounts to racial quotas – nothing more than the imposition of pre-conceived racial targets on society.

Transformation elevates a person's race above their individual character and reduces ability and merit to second rate considerations, behind a person's demographics.

I cannot in good faith teach this to the sons and daughters of a generation that was told that the very thing over which they had no control, would be the same thing that would define their lives.

The question is not what we teach our sons and daughters but what the lessons are we wish them to teach their sons and daughters.

Perhaps more to the point, I cannot understand how “representativity” addresses past imbalances. Demographic representativity is not a moral value. It is a statistic.

It is not a cure for poverty or the recipe through which the love and passion for a sport is born. It is a system in which something as random as a person’s race defines their prospects.

Further, I do not believe that the ANC’s motives, with regards to ideas such as ‘transformation’ and ‘democratic representativity’, are driven by entirely objective considerations.

Your reference to me in the House as a “*non-European*” follows similar racial remarks made by former Minister for Sport Ngconde Balfour – who referred to me as “*a coconut*”

Even more revealing are the comments made by Minister Balfour in 2002, when he admitted that he does not go to Newlands to watch white cricketers - that he is only interested those black members of the team – no doubt taking his lead from President’s Mbeki’s suggestion that transformation is about bringing “*our people*” into these sides.

It is these sorts of remarks and comments which lead me to believe that – objective criticisms of transformation aside – the ANC’s motivation is not driven by an aspiration to right a horrible wrong but rather by the desire to promote one section of our population while denigrating the others.

It is my opinion that the lesson we should be trying to share is that each and every person, irrespective of their race, be given the opportunity to lead the best life possible - that a person’s ability and talent be rewarded and celebrated and that each individual’s potential be safeguarded and nurtured.

This is a value I am happy to share and promote, and I believe it is this ideal that Abdul Minty spoke about when he addressed the United Nations Unit on Apartheid and stated that,

“The moral position is absolutely clear. Human beings should not be willing partners in perpetuating a system of racial discrimination. Sportsmen have a special duty in this regard in that they should be first to insist that merit, and merit alone, be the criterion for selecting teams for representative sport.”

The late former ANC Minister for Sport and Recreation, Steve Tshwete, agreed when he stated in 1994 that,

“We cannot allow tokenism. Colour decoration (of teams) is dangerous. It will destroy young talent if you promote players simply because they are black. These players must grow through the ranks. Overnight we cannot have 11 black cricketers or 15 black rugby players. We must change gradually through an evolutionary process and not through colour decoration.”

It is a source of great concern to me that under the leadership of President Mbeki the ANC has turned its back on these ideals, in favour of race based transformation.

As Minister Tshwete stated, government’s role should be to ensure that each child, each sports man and woman, has access to facilities and coaches and that the development of talent takes precedence over “representativity”.

The current situation is not acceptable. But the ANC seems to believe that merit and diversity are two mutually exclusive ideas. This is a fallacy.

The fact is that with very few exceptions, an athlete's potential to achieve is determined largely by his or her early development – and it is at school level that the emphasis for development should be placed.

Government should be campaigning about the lack of sporting facilities available to children in the townships and rural areas of South Africa or for sports bursaries for poor children to attend the top performing schools with the reputation for producing Proteas and Springboks.

Representing your country at national level is reserved for the best of the best. I do not believe that you should diversify South Africa's top teams by lowering the standard.

You change the status quo by ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to participate in sport, and that those with the raw talent are provided with every opportunity to develop to their full potential. It is a bottom-up approach that will achieve the diversity we would all like to see in our top teams.

Your assertion that "*most of South Africa, including virtually every sports administrator*" supports transformation is, quite frankly, absurd.

You single out Clive Rice as an exception but he is just one in a long list of experienced sports administrators and ex-players who have openly criticized transformation.

Only yesterday South African cricket icon Jonty Rhodes stated that "*The development of South African cricket is a concern. Unlike in Australia where the focus is on excellence, our focus is still on transformation. You cannot become the world's best if your focus is on transformation alone.*"

Former United Cricket Board President Raymond White has also expressed concern at the ANC's suggestion that quotas might be introduced as low down as school level.

"The evidence of those intimately associated with schoolboy cricket is that there is no need for quotas of any kind. These quotas are doing harm to the very players they are designed to help."

The list goes on and on.

And these are not politicians, far removed from the day-to-day activities of South African sport. They are the very people who have dedicated their life to participating in or administering a particular sport.

Perhaps of even more significance is the fact that numerous black players, such as Makhaya Ntini, have spoken out against a quota system and pleaded that they be chosen on the basis of merit, and merit alone.

I therefore do not believe that the comparison I drew between Basil D'Olivera and Kevin Pietersen is in any way misleading. In fact, I believe it is entirely accurate.

These two systems were obviously designed with different intentions, but the effect on the values of the individuals involved is the same.

Yesterday, in his response to President Mbeki's State of the Nation address Sports Minister Makhenkesi Stofile stated that South Africa's sports administrators should "*sacrifice a little bit in terms of winning*" in the interest of transformation, mirroring similar remarks by the President in 2002.

How is South Africa supposed to produce professional, dedicated sportsmen and women when we are not prepared to win? At the very least, how can we expect them to stay in the country when their race, rather than their ability is what counts?

We cannot, and we are now suffering the consequences.

I believe that this issue is but one example of a far more significant debate that should be held in a broader forum and would like to suggest, with your permission, that this correspondence be made available to the general public.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Donald Lee MP

DA Spokesperson on Sport and Recreation