

A Letter from Africa June 2014

We have a **new ANC Government**, following the results of the elections on May 7. It is largely much of the same but the brief details are as follows.

Party	Total %	WC	CT	EC	PE	Gauteng	Jhb
ANC	62.15	34	32.41	71	49	54.92	53.63
DA	22.23	57.26	59.31	16	41	28.5	29.76
EFF	6.35	2.32	2.72	4	4	10.26	10.15

The Cabinet has a few new faces, some have left, and some of the worst have been recycled into other cabinet posts. It has to be said that at least two of the new guys (very few girls) have landed running in order to try and resolve some serious and urgent trouble spots e.g. Platinum Strike which is now 5 months old and water contamination with 3 dead so far.

The big winner in the elections was probably the EFF of Julius Malema who seems to have taken all the votes that were given to COPE in the last election. Malema's court cases are outstanding and so too is his R16 million Tax bill. If he is sequestered or given a jail sentence of more than one year then he will not be able to continue as a member of parliament.

The DA gained, but missed out in Jhb. and PE. Maimane is the new leader in Parliament following the decision by Mazibuku to take a year off to study at Harvard. Zille remains Premier with DeLille as CT Mayor.

In 2016 we have the local elections when the ruling party does not tend to do so well. The hope here in Port Elizabeth is that the DA will take over the Municipality in 2016 and perhaps they can bring some honest and competent governance into our city and start to take us forward in a meaningful and focused way. At the moment you will see from the numbers that the ANC have less than 50% in PE.

Of course one troubling aspect is that the EFF have the ability to side with the ANC and establish a 66% majority that would permit changes to the Constitution.

My own short term hope is that the new Deputy President, Ramaphosa, will introduce some pragmatic, professional and business friendly policies/standards that will provide the U turn the country needs so badly, if we are to grow the economy, create jobs and thus reduce poverty and inequality.

Talking of growth, our Q1 GDP fell to below zero and if the same holds for Q2 then we will be in a technical state of recession by Q3. And that at a time when Africa is growing about 5%. The unemployment rate of young people also increased to about 36% and all these figures point to the failed policies and implementation of this corrupt ANC Government.

(Hey please change the subject. This stuff is depressing)

First my apologies for the absence of even one picture on the first page. I hope you are still with me.

A popular film in SA was “There is a Zulu on my stoep”. We do not have one on our patio in PE but we do sport a pomegranate!

The other big success story was the new veg area where we were able to grow about 3 tiny cocktail tomatoes! We ate the tomatoes but the pomegranate is more of a display item and not for eating (*so not ready for farm life yet*).



By the way, I have been a keen supporter of **Mamphela Ramphele** but she made a bad decision to unilaterally join the DA without consulting her supporters and this and other factors lead to the demise of Agang and perhaps the end of her political aspirations. It is possible that she holds truth too dear to make a “good” politician. She offers SA a lot and we need her to be active again. Her party did gain about 2 seats and so Agang, as such, lives on although she declined to be one of the representatives in Parliament.



We try and get visitors to “**sign in**” but the process does not involve a pen and book, rather a hammer and coin.

This picture tries to explain.

A 5c coin is hammered into the tree stump as the arrow indicates. This means that you have called and left your mark. It is down on the “Walk on the Wild side” part of the garden and this tree has been decorated with sea shells.

The FA Cup is a competition that has lost a lot of glamour as the top sides in England are more focused on the European Cups. 2014, however, has seen it regain its` prominence as one of the global top events. Well, you may not agree but how could it be otherwise as my side Arsenal has just won it!!

Those around the world who follow the **Pistorius** trial, will be interested to know that he is currently undergoing a month of psychiatric evaluation following the evidence led that he suffers from GAD. It will be a few weeks before this trial continues. **Shrien Devani** is here following the tax payer having to hire a private jet to escort him from the UK. The poor tax payer will foot this bill as well as Pistorius`s trial and there is scepticism about the outcome of both as justice is often not seen to be provided in these high profile cases where money talks louder.

If I committed murder or a serious crime then I think I would display signs of anxiety and depression.

There was one other big winner in the SA elections.

Have you heard of the AIC?

Well do not be embarrassed if you have not because they are a tiny localised group with virtually no support. But...on the voters list the parties are placed in alphabetical order and thus the AIC was next to the ANC. Add to this the fact that the colours of the AIC are very similar to the ANC and you can begin to see what happened.

Yes...you are right. Lots and lots of votes were cast with the AIC all over the country. They obtained 0.5% of the vote which gave them more votes than Azapo and the PAC combined.

A draft from the past.



We see here pictures of two of our street neighbours when we lived in St. Neots about 1972. We had bought a house there as being the closest spot to London that we could afford. On the right are Vic and Stella who did the commute with me into London each day. To the left is the Giles family who lived next door to us and as locals knew all the super drinking places in the area.

Both shots capture good weather allowing a great braai in the back garden of the new house in Eynsbury and it also provided the backdrop for Vic to show us around the CAMRA pubs in the Cotswolds as they now lived in that area.

We think the Giles family pic. is from 1989 and the Cotswolds shot in 1983.

I was gifted 3 books by Richard Dawkins (thanks to Melanie and Alex). These were placed with other **scientific type stuff** like the books of Stephen Hawking. I am not sure sometimes whether I am reading Stephen Dawkins or Richard Hawking!

The Dawkins works are being read slowly in between other lighter fiction and I am now on the third book. I have always been interested in things and religion is one of the fields where I am keen to read or listen to the thoughts of people. I have often described myself as a "student of religion" when asked about my religious beliefs.

I am no longer 20 and believe that I am ready to read and absorb the views of Richard Dawkins as one other opinion about religion and life in general.

I use the word “ready” in a meaningful way because the evidence and views need to be considered deeply in an objective and calm manner. Extremists should stay clear, or even be banned from reading them; rather like an “X” rated film might exclude those who are not yet ready.

Let us paint a picture.

We have an Earth with a liquid core at some 5000oC and beneath our thin crust lies the mantle of magma flowing at 2000oC. The crust moves around in pieces and the whole planet is revolving and shooting forward.

I doubt if anyone would select this spot to put up the tent and call it home.

Evolution is now firmly established as the basis for life by virtually all scientists and is not really in dispute. The problem is that this line of thought excludes religion from the formula! Yet most people on Earth follow one religion or another which represents, for many, the guiding light of existence and purpose in this life and thereafter.

The perplexing issue then is how to reconcile the two.

If we were to remove the restraints of religion then it would be quite easy to imagine a world in total chaos. So what should we do?

You will note that this section of the letter ends with a question.

Richard (I have read enough to be on first name terms) comes up with an interesting choice of words that I think represents a fairly good interim label for him and me. And that is “a secular Christian”.

If anyone has any thoughts on this topic then please fire away.

(I am not sure that politics and now religion in this letter is a good idea)

After all it is merely a discussion about science and all of my readers are ready.

The Great Share Challenge of 2008.

One sunny day in June 2008 we were having a social gathering and each person was “given” 1 million Rand to invest on the JSE. The challenge was to see who did the best by the year end.

The markets collapsed following the sub prime story in the USA but by 2010 I did a quick recheck on how we had done. Many of us would have made at least another million rand. If only it had been real money!!

The JSE now stands at around 50000 but we were about 33000 in 2008. Look at some of the selections:-

Aspen from R38.3 to R287, St Bank R85 to R142, MTN R130 to R228, Distell from R40 to R137. Tigerbrands R144 to R293, SASOL R400 to R608, AECI R64 to R118.

Keith, Mike, Jenny, Rhoda and Ken may recall the day.

I am sorry for the shortage of pictures but I have managed a whole letter without mentioning Nkandla, being a story that will not go away however much Zuma and the Cabinet wish it to. Will Madonsela stand firm under the ANC onslaught?

I have one last subject for you that will allow a picture on the next page.



In April we went down to the Garden Route and spent a great week at **Placid Waters in Sedgefield**. A few of you will know the place.

We had two of the top units and were joined by Mike and Val.

Canoeing, a walk to Gericke Point, pool and golf were some of the actions undertaken. This picture is from the paragliding launch site and clearly Mike is enjoying his role as the “thorn”.

And the other has us out on the water trying to look cool and seafaring types.

(I think the chunky life jackets paint a different story)



And so it is goodbye from me and farewell from Bev.

Cheers

Alan Shearn

June 8 2014