

## Is this the end of **denial**?

*More irreverent postcards from our intrepid reporter.*

Dear Com,

Good to hear that Minister Omar is volunteering for a public HIV test, and telling us that he has always based his view on the accepted wisdom about the cause of AIDS. Pity he didn't do it a year or so ago when Thabo and his so-called dissident cyber buddies were leading us in chronic denial. It could have helped those who were confused about the safety of anti-retrovirals to make up their minds and perhaps be with us today. Still, better late than never. Whatever happened to the Cosatu leadership resolution to do the same thing I wonder? We need solid role-models com before our young people reject the revolution, and turn to dope, soap or Idols for inspiration.

By the way, have you noticed how quiet the AIDS dissidents have become of late? Seems the Denial Tendency have been threatened with the cold shoulder by international business, the very people who are supposed to be persuaded to come and invest here and rescue us from the Third World. Oops! Well as my old Marxist teacher used to say, if you sleep with the enemy, expect to have a few nightmares. Hey Com, let's hope that the recent sad events ensure that the AIDS dissident tendency wakes up to the realisation that this terrible virus can attack us all.

Dear Com,

Went to the Cosatu May Day Rally in Germiston and it was good to see lots of old friends and comrades. Mind you,

I wish they had revolutionised the format of the meeting. Can't we break with the practice of speaker after speaker more or less saying the same things hour after hour? To cap it all we then had Minister Cassa-Burri lecture us for half an hour about how we must take HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis seriously. Comrade Minister, we in the Unions have been taking the matter seriously, it's the cabinet that hasn't!

Whatever happened to celebration on May Day? Why no music, drama, workers' poetry, a bit of food, something for the kids to do. Seems the Cape Town comrades have a better idea. A family picnic with a couple of sharp speakers followed by fun for the whole family. Remember the old slogan, 'Revolution is the carnival of the oppressed!' A prize of a free subscription goes to the first one to write or phone into the Bulletin and say where this quote comes from.

Dear Com,

Been thinking about all this fuss around NEPAD, the new African partnership policy being promoted by Com Thabo and his Nigerian counterpart. Heard Zweli on the radio complaining that the unions have not been given the opportunity to comment on it, or play any role in putting it together. Sound familiar? Does this government never learn? Then again, maybe they do! Do you remember how Gear emerged? It was sprung on us by Clever Trevor who cunningly judged that most union leaders would adopt a

cautious 'lets wait and see' approach, for fear of upsetting the fragile alliance apple cart. Hey and we waited and we waited. It wasn't until the harsh realities became clear a couple of years later and privatisation reared its ugly head that our leadership comrades got the steam up to say, 'Hold on coms, this is a bit different to the RDP, this Gear is killing us!'

Is Thabo playing the same game? We get to be the nation that is leading NEPAD and there has been virtually no discussion between or within the alliance about what it actually means. Doesn't look good com. If NEPAD is so good for workers, why hasn't there even been a lukewarm attempt to sell it to us. Call me suspicious but I smell a continental Gear coming on Com.

Dear Com,

Can you believe it? I actually managed to get a copy of NEPAD from a visiting Nigerian comrade. No wonder its been kept from us! It's all about being competitive, flexible, responsible, and not rocking the boat for investment opportunities. And though it makes reference to the need for us to put our own democratic houses in order, and address poverty, it's clear that it's actually about reassuring the rich that we will not threaten returns on their investments. Hey Com who ever wrote it is wasted in politics. They should go and work for some top-flight advertising agency selling organic peanut butter. Talk about form and no content. It reads like something that

George Bush or Tony Blair might have commissioned. The platitudes are piled on like Black Cat. The only difference is this doesn't cling to your teeth but sticks in your throat.

But it does beg the question. Where is the workers' alternative? Zweli is right to ask why workers were not consulted, and I hear that one little bundle of trouble in Nigeria, Adams Oshiohmole of the Nigeria Labour Congress is saying the same thing to Obansanjo. But sooner or later, someone has got to say that it's not a place at the table we want, to share out the few crumbs from the cake. We want the bakery to make the cake our way!

Thought of a good slogan for the campaign to the tune of Bob Marley's Get Up Stand Up... 'Workers up off your NEPADs. Stand up for your R.I.G.H.T.S!' (Revolutionary Internationalism Generating Harmony, Towards Socialism). That could help give May Day a cool revolutionary swing!

Dear Com,

Here's a warning for Comrade Jeff Radebe Minister of Privatisation about his counterpart in Britain. Blair's right-hand man (some would say sycophant) Stephen Byers MP, has been in the forefront of pushing rail privatisation and extolling its virtues at every opportunity. After three deadly accidents, and a rail network in perpetual chaos, the (dis)honourable minister has finally been forced to resign and shunted out of the cabinet. He was in Tony's good books and did everything that he was told to do. So what made him resign you may ask? For a start the rail unions elected a new radical leadership despite the best efforts of the Blairite Media, and then worked especially hard to get their

message across to the masses and to other trade unionists. Eventually everyone knew that the root cause of the chaos and the accidents was the miserable penny pinching of the private rail operators to maximise their profits. Not satisfied at having bought public utilities at knock-down prices, they spent little or nothing on maintaining safety standards. Railway workers who raised safety considerations were silenced, and fatal accidents, which were waiting to happen, eventually did so, with devastating effect. Ordinary workers died needlessly on their way to work because Blair, Byers and their rich cronies put their obsession for privatisation and profits before safety. Even Blair, faced with a massive revolt, is now talking about the need for some sort of nationalised rail system. Meanwhile, the Minister of Privatisation here steams ahead dogmatically with his party card in one hand, and his discredited policies in the other.

Made me think Com. What disaster will it take to get a re-think from the cabinet? I shudder to think. Let's not wait for a disaster com, let's build further the movement against privatisation now!

Dear Com,

Hey the Cosas kids got a little out of hand in Joeys and likewise the cream of the nation at the University of the North. Someone has got to tell those kids that ripping into workers of the informal sector, or demanding a third of a million bucks for a Freshers' Party is not the way to build the sort of worker-student solidarity we need to get things rolling our way again. As always though, there must be a number of genuine concerns behind the headlines.

Mind you, it's not as if young people are set a good example from all our revered elders is it? Comrade Tony Yengeni is hardly a role model, or Morkel, or any of those countless others who lead extravagant lifestyles. Seems to me the student movement has been in a state of suspended animation for the last few years, and hasn't really had a chance to flex its muscles properly given the rigidity and conformity of politics in general. Certainly a number of those student leaders who have come in to the unions of late are as stiff as old uncle Joe Stalin himself. Hardly surprising then that when students do get out on the streets, the sort of discipline that the old ANC expects is not there. Maybe I am reading too much into this com, but doesn't this reflect an overall depoliticisation in the country? Answers on a postcard please Com!

Dear Com,

Interesting to read about the Fedusa congress last week. Not like the Cosatu congress. Different planet perhaps. But interesting to see the assembled 300 delegates or so listening earnestly to a procession of political heavy weights. Clever Trevor rightly saying how the unions must take control of Pension Funds and use their representation to direct investment into socially useful projects, Minister Shepherd rightly arguing for full use of the skills legislation to re-equip workers and to tackle discrimination. And finally President Thabo himself urging the Fedusa comrades to become partners in creating the New Worker. Of course we are all in favour of the New Worker, but where is the New Work Com Pres?

Yours,  
Com Dot Com