

Zille's reasoning on HIV/Aids throws logic and humanity out of the window

EUSEBIUS MCKAISER

IF YOU thought only ousted president Thabo Mbeki could brazenly adopt evidence-insensitive positions on HIV/Aids, you are dead wrong.

Helen Zille, leader of the DA and premier of the Western Cape, has decided to continue his legacy of recalcitrance on HIV/Aids.

As a consequence, her public political leadership is at its weakest yet, and the party itself has been damaged by its failure to temper its leader's impulses and prevent her hat-trick of recent intellectual own goals.

Zille argues that it would be a

good idea to make it a crime to knowingly expose someone else to HIV. This sounds like the stuff of women's liberation, what with cheating men in abundance (unproven though it is, of course), but actually it is not a solution to the correctly identified problem.

International experts on the impact of criminalisation on the public health battle against HIV/Aids – including researchers Carol Galletly (Medical College of Wisconsin), Scott Burris (Temple University) and Matthew Weait (Birkbeck College, University of London), among others – have shown in peer-reviewed journals of

international repute that criminalisation is counter-productive.

For one thing, the point of such a law must presumably be to dissuade people from exposing others to HIV.

But if I alone knew my status (assuming Zille doesn't propose that we release public records of people's status), why would I fear the law coming after me?

What would be the chances of decent levels of criminal conviction – and thus deterrence – being achieved? And if a law or policy cannot achieve its intended aim, why adopt it?

In fact, not only will criminal convictions be low due to the high

evidential burden on the state and the private nature of sex, but the proposed law will have additional adverse consequences.

It will disproportionately burden already disempowered black women, since they – as a result of antenatal testing – are more likely to know their status than others.

Black women will walk around with legal duties over their heads which men who infect them, but who do not know their status, won't have.

In addition, of course, criminalisation would reinforce an association between HIV and illegality. This, in turn, would fuel social

stigma. The net overall effect is likely to be less, not more, voluntary testing (of course, that is not a problem for Jack Bloom, another senior DA politician, who, illiberally enough, thinks we should simply test people without their consent).

Zille's intervention was intellectually shoddy.

Besides, the founding assumption – that concurrent sexual relationships explain the existence of the general epidemic – is itself debatable among experts, despite Helen Epstein's work, which Zille relied on.

Top clinician Professor Francois

Venter explained to Zille that it might be possible that South Africans were genetically more disposed to infection by the virus than others, and so Epstein's hypothesis should not be taken as gospel.

Zille dismissed him with insult rather than logic and counter-evidence.

The leadership lesson is simple: speak to the experts about their subject if you are not an expert yourself.

Zille simply behaved like a stubborn school debater determined to win the argument for its own sake instead of hitting the pause button and consulting the experts.

Instead, she called the experts an

"Aids Gestapo" and accused Professor Venter of implying that a virus can be racist.

And therein lies the essence of her weakness as a leader: she showed a shocking unwillingness to concede important errors on an issue as critical as the public health debate about HIV/Aids.

This recalcitrance, along with personal attacks on expert critics, exposes the DA as being not much different from the ANC.

I'm afraid there is little for DA members to cheer about in this week before Christmas.

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Time for Proteas to settle old score

The very first South Africa-Sri Lanka cricketing encounter was an unusual affair over a century ago, writes Dean Allen

WHEN the Sri Lankan cricket team arrived in South Africa ahead of their tour of the country, Proteas batsman AB de Villiers admitted that he "hardly recognised half of their team".

In contrast to the popular recognition accorded such high-profile cricketing visitors as India and Australia, few are anywhere near as familiar with our current cricketing visitors.

Indeed, it has been five years since South Africa last played a Test against Sri Lanka and eight years since they last played them in a Test in this country.

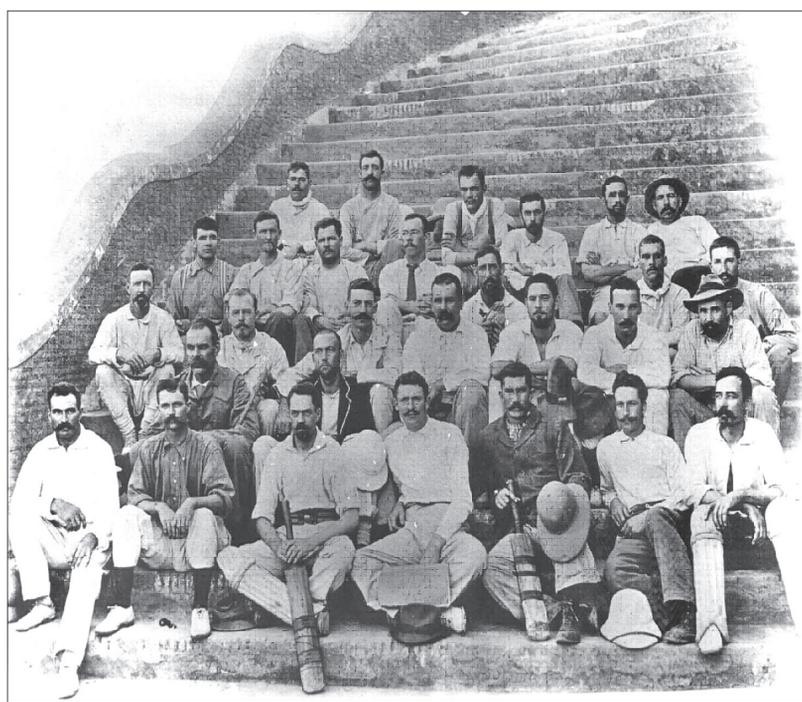
Coupled with this, the enigmatic Sri Lankans – who are capable of beating any side on their best day – are expected to field a number of new players in a team veteran batsman Kumar Sangakkara describes as being "in transition".

However despite the lack of familiarity between the two sides the history between both cricket-mad countries goes back further than most people might realise.

While both nations have faced each other in 14 Test matches and 46 One Day Internationals since 1992, a little known fixture took place over a century ago.

In 1901 South Africa was in the midst of a bitter war for its territories – yet cricket was still being played. Indeed, while the 1901 "official" South African side was touring the cricket fields of England, another, and in many ways more historic, contest was taking place.

On July 5 and 6, 1901, a match took place between a team of Boer prisoners-of-war from Diyatalawa in Sri Lanka (known then as Ceylon) and a local team – the Colombo Colts. This sporting challenge, made even more historic by its being played out during the South African War, was the idea of J Heyzer, one of the prominent members of the Colombo Colts Cricket Club. Despite resistance from some people in the community who were upset about a cricket match against prisoners of war, permission was received from the authorities and the game was played at the ground of the Nonde-



IT'S JUST CRICKET: The Ahmednagar Boer Cricket Club in India played frequently against their British guards.

script Cricket Club in Victoria Park in Ceylon.

In total 27 000 Boers were captured during the South African War and 24 000 of them were sent to prisoner of war camps abroad in the British enclaves of St Helena, Ceylon, India and Bermuda. Sport came as a natural deliverance from the adversity of the camps and it was during this period that a large percentage of the Boer prisoners of war were introduced to British sports, such as cricket, for the first time.

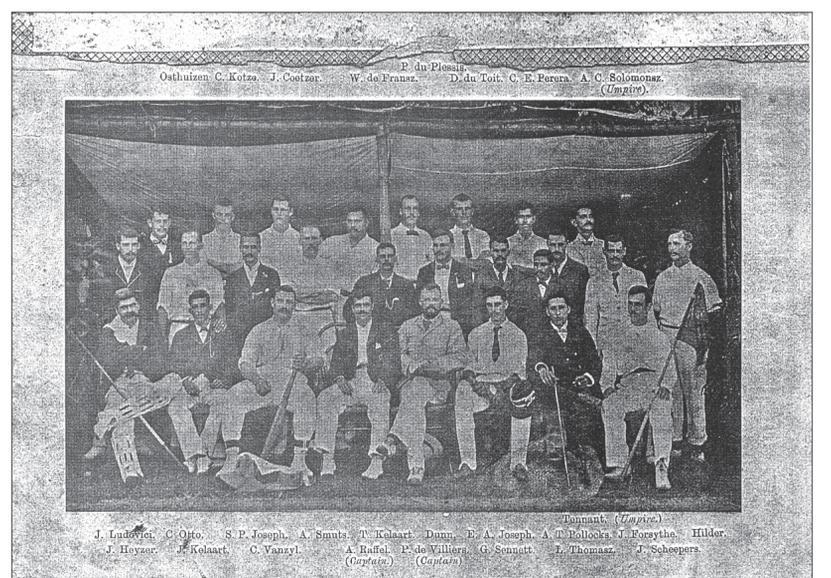
Some prisoners, of course, were already capable cricketers, having played the game at a high level at

clubs back in South Africa. Most notably PH de Villiers, who had played representative matches against the first three English sides to tour South Africa, and G Sennett, the Orange Free State wicketkeeper. De Villiers, had circumstances been different, would most likely have toured England with the 1901 team instead of being incarcerated in Ceylon. C Otto, another prisoner of war, was a member of the James-town Cricket Club and later also played for the City and Suburban Club in Johannesburg.

The Boers, who were given special parole for this particular match,

had already established a cricket club at Diyatalawa with a healthy membership of over 70. The management of the Colts granted 600 Rix-dollars to prepare for all the spectators who were expected. Apart from the four temporary stands that were erected, a special seating area was decorated with plants from the nursery of PD Siebel for the Governor of Ceylon, Sir West Ridgway. Accommodation was provided for the players in the form of a marquee while a private bar provided refreshments of "excellent quality".

For the duration of the match the Boers travelled to Victoria Park



LOOKING BACK: This picture of Boer prisoners of war and the Colombo Colts was taken in Ceylon in July 1901.

every day from their prisoner of war camp at Mt Lavinia.

An enthusiastic crowd witnessed how PH de Villiers, the captain of the Colts, won the toss and decided to send the Colts in to bat first. The Colts were bowled out for 146 runs. C Otto took 7 wickets for 50 runs, while CE Perera scored 90 runs for the Colts – including 4 sixes and 8 fours! The congenial spirit continued as the Boers enjoyed lunch at the Galle Face Hotel as guests of the Colts, after which the match resumed. The Boers' lack of experience however was evident in their first innings when they could only muster 53, of which P du Plessis scored 25. At the end of the first day the Colts were already standing at 71 for 6 and they decided to continue the match on the 6th.

After lunch the next day, the teams reappeared where, according

to the local newspaper, "the reception accorded to the Boers was of the most cordial description".

It appears that the prisoners, who may have expected a chilly reception before the start, had during the game won favour with the crowd – both European and Ceylonese.

At 3pm the Colts were all out for 114 runs and the Boers needed 207 runs to win the match. The Boers however, scored only 66 runs and the Colts won by 141 runs. The leading run scorer was G Kotzé with 13.

The Ceylon Independent had the following to say about the match: "The Boers can bowl and the Boers can field and they are by no means indifferent performers with the knife and fork, but at batting, well, one must defer final judgement upon this delicate point until the return match which we hope to see, Governor permitting, played in

Diyatalawa before many weeks are past."

There was, however, no return match. Within months the Boer prisoners of war were on their way back to South Africa and the chance to avenge their defeat gone forever.

Perhaps, then, old scores can be settled as the Proteas host the Sri Lankans over the coming weeks. Certainly if the matches are played with the same passion as this little-known yet significant fixture in July 1901 then we should all be in for an entertaining series.

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ONE OF the good things about having guests from the northern hemisphere at this time of year is they're quite easy to please.

After suffering a few weeks of sub-zero temperatures, they are just happy to see the sun and feel its warmth.

My family members from Canada and England arrived last week, looking pale and chilled. They bloomed like sunflowers when they felt the Cape sun on their cheeks.

I expected that. And like all proper Capetonians, I accepted personal responsibility for the sunshine.

But one thing that did surprise me was the comments of my northern hemisphere guests about our traffic.

It's an SA tradition to curse and swear at the low standard of local driving, but my family, who have not been in SA for a few years, remarked on the vast improvement of driving since they were last here.

This was good to hear. Our traffic authorities have certainly been highly visible in recent years, and we're regularly irritated by the road blocks that have popped up everywhere.

Apparently it's all working. Once I saw the Cape traffic through their fresh eyes, I realised things really have improved.

Maybe it's more apparent here in the southern Peninsula than in the rest of the Cape, but road manners are mostly pretty good.

Drivers do wave you into the traffic stream and I've actually seen some motorists slowing down and stopping when the traffic light turns



DAVID BIGGS

Tavern of the Seas

amber. What happened to the old tradition of stepping on the accelerator when the light turns orange?

Maybe we're being unfair about the standard of local driving.

Or maybe the driving habits of motorists in the northern hemisphere have deteriorated to the stage we were in three years ago.

Christmas Chuckle

A Tavern reader sent in a Christmas "Last Laugh" which he said had appeared in this column some years ago. He said he thought it was so good it should be used again.

Right then, here's a free, recycled Last Laugh for the Christmas season.

A mother took her 16-year-old daughter to the doctor for a general check-up.

She explained that the girl was often sick in the mornings, had strange food cravings and seemed to

be putting on weight.

The doctor examined her and said: "I'm afraid young Julie is pregnant."

"Oh, that's impossible!" said the mother indignantly. "She doesn't even have a boyfriend and she never goes out. She's with me almost all the time. She's never even kissed a man, have you, Julie?"

"No, Mom."

The doctor got up from his chair, walked to the window and stared out silently for a long time.

Eventually the mother said: "What are you doing now, doctor?"

The doctor said: "The last time this sort of thing happened, a star appeared in the sky and three kings came riding by on camels."

"I'm just making sure I don't miss it this time."

Last Laugh

A builder sent his apprentice down to the hardware store to buy material.

"We need 20 planks 12mm by 150mm," said the lad confidently.

"How long do you want them?" asked the sales person.

"Oh, forever," said the apprentice. "We're building a house."

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This Christmas, wish upon a sports star

ALL I want for Christmas is... well, now there's a thought.

Everyone's dashing off to the shops to buy presents so we thought we at the Clubhouse may as well ask the stars from this year's sports pages to send us their Christmas wish lists – you know, the things they've asked Father Christmas to put in their stockings for 2012.

Let's start with rugby.

The Springboks want a coach who can improve them, but they'd settle for a coach who doesn't embarrass them. Funnily enough there's a former coach of Italy (and the Boks) who's looking for a challenge and he's looking for a team that doesn't embarrass him. Maybe this one won't be too hard, Santa.

We know that SA Rugby, however, has a habit of making easy things difficult – so we won't be holding our breath.

The Kiwis simply want Mr McCaw and Mr Carter to stay fit because if they do, there's a good chance they'll go through the season unbeaten.

The Stormers have simply written down "BMT" on their wish list. You might have to google that one, Santa. Maybe it's the new PS3 game?

Some random SMSer to the Argus sports pages wants to be made selector of the Springboks so he can select Isma-eel Dollie as Bok captain and make him president and honorary player for life. He also



ALAN VALKENBURG

The Clubhouse

wants to rename the Springboks the Isma-eel XV, in honour of the SK Walmers flyhalf.

Most readers of Cape Argus sport's SMS column want this person, and the SMSers who like to send in match reports of the previous night's sports action, to run out of air-time on their cellphones.

Stellenbosch didn't put anything down on their list – they were too busy doing sprints, bench-pressing farm animals and doing push-ups on crushed glass in order to ensure they come back meaner, stronger and tougher than ever before.

They want their Super League A and Varsity Cup titles back, but don't worry, Santa, they intend to do that without your help. The UCT players, meanwhile, just want their hangers to go away.

The Northern Hemisphere rugby sides want a win in the south

– any win, just one will do, against the Tri-Nations, nay, four-nations teams.

On that note, Sanzar are wishing that the new Championship (Tri-Nations plus Argentina) will be a success. Also, that the media call it by the above name, and not the Four-Nations. Likewise, they'll be sending us more e-mails if we call the Super Rugby anything other than the Super Rugby, and not the Super 15, which is a no-no.

Tennis: Wozniacki wants a Grand Slam title (obviously) and Rafa wants his clay-court shoes back. He says he lent them to Novak and the Serbian hasn't returned them. Maybe a new pair?

The Fed just wants to carry on in 2012 like he ended 2011.

Anger management classes would be a good gift for Serena. Most of the women on the tour could do with a copy of the "how to handle pressure" handbook.

The F1 drivers, bar two, want a fire to break out at Red Bull's factory. Nothing serious, you understand, just something that destroys all the cars, computer hard-drives and any plans of the 2012 cars. Maybe you could pop a small incendiary device down the factory chimney? Oh, and Lewis Hamilton wants Felipe Massa to retire so he doesn't have to drive into him anymore.

The SA hockey teams want a few inches in the newspaper next year. Oh, and to qualify for the Olympics.

Luis Suarez wants a pair of boots with longer studs, because his clearly aren't long enough – he keeps on falling down in the penalty area. He didn't ask for this himself, mind you, but it's obvious he needs them, isn't it?

United want a hard man in midfield while Jose Mourinho wants the definition of "fair" to be changed from "equal for everyone" to "in favour of Mourinho" so that when things are anything but in favour of him and his team, he can claim bias and blame referees without fear of sanction.

The rest of the world and the media – Real Madrid supporters aside – just want him to shut up.

Bafana want a striker. One that isn't fat. Or slow. Or has an attitude problem.

England want a soccer captain who isn't going to get horribly drunk, cheat on his wife, shag a teammate's girlfriend or beat up someone in a pub. Surely there must be someone on the island who hasn't done any of the above?

The Proteas want a Test series win. Against someone other than Bangladesh or Zimbabwe. Captain Graeme Smith wants to rediscover his form... and for people to like him. And for his wife to keep her tweets to herself.

Oh, and Tiger Woods wants to shoot 69 on a regular basis in 2012.

Think you can handle that, Santa?