

## **A strange and irrational course of action** – Boksburg Advertiser 2019

### **Walk the Line – an editor's perspective on all things newsworthy**

1 day ago

**Funny things are again afoot in our land of strangeness, where President Cyril Ramaphosa apparently finds great joy in a courtesy call from Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.**

How the royal family is supposed to help South Africa, who knows, and how they are even involved in our affairs is less known, but yes, it seems even such entertainment is providing a dose of escapism from our decline into anarchy.

Maybe we should all take heart as infrastructure and state-owned enterprises collapse all around us that at least a smiling president has time to write a weekly message to instil some kind of hope in the nation.

He writes, for example, the following: "After a decade of low growth and deepening poverty, people are looking for signs of progress in tackling the many challenges confronting our country."

Well, Mr President, we are no longer looking, we are just surviving right now, hanging on by a thin thread of sanity. We don't need more rhetoric on a failed state; we need proper action once and for all, and it must come fast and furiously.

Our state of mind is probably similar to the crew sailing with Christopher Columbus when they just could not find land after months on the open sea. They were stricken with illness, starving, exhausted and sick and tired of it all.

And then, miraculously, someone yelled "Land!" Problem is, in South Africa we are still in the boat, and the sun is hot and hope is fading as the storm clouds gather. We are trembling in anticipation for someone to shout "Land!", but all we hear is "Oh, look, it is Prince Harry."

Regarding the strange things, we all know South Africa is in trouble when it comes to morals as reflected in the continuing crime against women and children.

So, in reaction to our moral decline into decadence and barbarity, what do we do? Yes, spanking a child is now no longer legal.

Granted, violence begets violence. But what we really need is more discipline, not less. This court judgment just doesn't seem to make sense.

And then, we know South Africa is struggling to provide proper health care, medical aids are becoming so expensive you wonder if they will include a gold bar as a reward, while state hospitals offer a trip down nightmare alley, full of trauma and suffering.

So to fix this catastrophe, the government comes up with the proposed National Health Insurance (NHI), which is as complicated as the Consumer Protection Act.

You fear the NHI will only succeed in draining the taxpayers even more while offering no guarantee that health care will improve. Probably all that will happen is a rise in unemployment as medical schemes struggle to survive. Again, this all seems irrational.

On top of it all, as we bemoan our poor standard of education, with our system as healthy as eating polony during the listeriosis crisis, the government comes up with a new plan.

Recently the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, presented the department's intention to introduce the General Education Certificate (GEC), which would see learners being formally allowed to leave school as early as Grade Nine. Not surprisingly, her announcement was met with mixed feelings.

While the option would exist for learners to gain skills as artisans instead of completing matric, industry bodies doubt whether employers would be willing to allow these early school leavers to complete in-service training.

The minister said their plan proposed to send more learners into technical education and introduced new subjects such as applied mathematics and applied science.

She also stressed the certificate was not an exit option for learners, but rather learners "will now have the option to pursue an academic pathway, technical vocational pathway, and even a technical occupational pathway".

It all sounds great, but let us be honest, is this not a convenient way of admitting that many learners are struggling to finish school because of our inability to provide proper education?

One fears many learners will choose this option, grabbing the opportunity and certificate as they run screaming into an unknown and scary future.

And how many of them will really pursue other career paths? Reality is that some learners are not disciplined enough to finish school or have no desire to be educated.

So while we are in desperate need of better education and to make sure learners are fully prepared for the real world, we rather opt to offer an earlier exit point, even though it is technically not an exit point.

Can anybody spell 'disaster'? And so Rome burns, and while we don't have a Nero playing his fiddle, at least we have a smiling president and a rugby team that celebrates beating Namibia.

**ALSO READ:** No more spanking as we plunge deeper into anarchy

May justice be done for the sake of sanity