

By Dr Bridgette Gasia

There is a disconcerting air of triumphalism in the Sunday Tribune's response to the resignation of the CEO of Dube TradePort Corporation.

Granted, it was the Tribune which first published allegations against the CEO. Granted, the publication of these allegations, and the subsequent investigation launched by the DTPC board, no doubt played a role in the sequence of events.

But the question that begs to be answered is: does that give the Tribune license to use the departure of the CEO as an excuse to cast aspersions on every aspect of governance and management at DTPC? Does that give the newspaper justification to publish not one but four articles in one single edition, patting itself on the back and salivating about further details of supposed scandals?

Is your newspaper's response not somewhat disproportionate, and hugely one-sided - not to mention insulting to the integrity of what is without question a huge economic success and a major contributor to economic growth and development in KwaZulu Natal?

After all, was it not this selfsame DTPC board that commissioned an independent probity report into the allegations, within two weeks of their publication? Is it not significant that this entire saga, which strikes at the core of governance at a state-owned entity, has been dealt with within the space of exactly a month?

Why, indeed, is there no acknowledgement that it was DTPC that initially expressed concerns about the conduct of contractors at its Cargo Terminal and thoroughly investigated these concerns? The results of these investigations are set out in great detail in the court papers filed by the corporation months ago, and are therefore a matter of public record.

Nor is there any semblance of acknowledgement in your back-slapping articles that it was the DTPC board that immediately commissioned an independent probity report into the allegations of impropriety -- and that the Board has acted decisively on the basis of that report, and continues to act, in the interests of good governance?

Has the Board not collaborated with relevant authorities (such as the Public Protector and prosecuting authorities) so that they can make a considered opinion on which route is best to pursue?

Where is the evidence to substantiate your suggestion that the DTPC Board will support or cover for any person who has committed misconduct?

Where, we might ask, is the outrage one would expect at the actions of the supposed co-conspirator in the improprieties "exposed" by the Tribune? Where is the evidence that the newspaper has investigated their role, their motives, and their gain? Does the Tribune condone the activities of WFS SA? Has it expended the

same amount of effort in exposing the role, motives and activities of WFS SA - or is it just easier to accept a dossier of emails from a disgruntled service provider, whose contract has been cancelled because of improprieties, without investigating its motives?

Rather than explore the "other side" of impropriety, the Tribune continues to act as if the only trace of wrongdoing vests in DTPC. It applies a blanket of self-righteous condemnation to the reputation of every single one of the corporation's employees, it questions the integrity of the very board which has acted decisively on allegations, and it attempts to drum up public pressure on the organisation to review every single contract which it has signed - without even a hint of evidence to substantiate this.

Let us state this very clearly: there is no suspicion of any impropriety involving the current management of DTPC. There is no on-going investigation into their daily activities. There is no reason to suspect that there is wrongdoing beyond what has been reported in the media in the past few weeks, acted upon and dealt with.

But if there ever is evidence of other wrongdoing, you can rest assured we will act, as speedily and as decisively as we have in the WFS SA case.

In conclusion: the board and management of DTPC are very conscious of the fact that the Tribune consistently ignores any of the good work which is being undertaken by the corporation, and - unlike many other media outlets - fails to give its readers insight into its many success stories.

Search as we might, we can find no evidence that the Tribune has actually reported on the actual business or developmental activities of Dube TradePort, or its very significant contribution to economic development and growth. We can find no evidence that it finds the DTPC's contribution to economic growth, infrastructure development, job creation or sustainable community development to be even vaguely newsworthy.

That may be because finding these stories requires more effort than waiting for an aggrieved former service provider or self-interested whistleblower to pass information its reporters' way. It may be because it is easier to craft sweeping self-congratulatory statements in editorials than to report on the hard work the DTPC executives involve themselves in - every single day of the week - in the interests of the KwaZulu Natal economy, and the national economy.

We are not asking for favourable treatment. We are not asking for impropriety to be condoned, because it can never happen under our watch. We are just asking for balance, fairness, and journalistic integrity.

Or do you need someone to drop another dossier of emails in your lap before that will happen?

- **Dr Bridgette Gasa is chairperson of the Dube TradePort Corporation Board**