CHAPTER 11:
April Fools' Day

"Politicians are just the unnatural lubricant on the democracy-flavoured condom that government dons every time it tries to disguise the fact that it’s about to screw its citizens again."
- Chris Roper

April Fools' Day has been more farts than highlights, never a feature in my life. As a child, I wasn't like most boys. Although I felt the awkwardness of peer group pressure, I couldn't, for example, participate in the stupidity of fart jokes. I wasn't devoid of humour, just leaning more towards the meaningful or twisted kind found in movies such as 'Ferris Bueller's Day Off' and 'Lethal Weapon'. I haven't changed as an adult. I'm not into most stand-up, excessively swearing or shouting comedians. But I appreciate the sweets on knives offered by George Carlin, Bill Hicks and John Oliver. Bill Maher is so good, simply the best, that I forgive his occasional liberal fanaticism.

My joke on the DA and the Knysna Municipality was spontaneous. Whether you find it funny or not depends on the kind of humour you fancy, and what you want or don't want from this world. What was certain is that my target didn't find me funny. They issued a press release against me. Because their reaction said a lot about who they were, it was meaningful... and intensely hilarious.

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The fake press release I composed on behalf of the DA and Knysna Municipality was posted on my blog. Strangely, that wasn't a dead give-away. Maybe the commentary I opened with was good decoy.

I hope readers realise that this is more damage control than genuine attention. The Mayor admits it’s not her decision but from higher up. They haven’t even contacted me yet they put out a press release. It’s election year, folks! Nevertheless, I will approach the meeting with genuine intention – we need to clean up the past and paint a better future - Mike

Mayor Wolmarans to Meet Mike Hampton
1 April 2016

Knysna Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans has announced that she will be meeting self-proclaimed activist, Mike Hampton.

"For five years, Hampton has made allegations about corruption and..."
"maladministration," said Executive Mayor Wolmarans on Thursday. "For five years, we’ve denied that there’s any truth in that. We are, proudly, the Clean Audit Town. Unfortunately, Hampton has persisted, resulting in our having to attend an inappropriate meeting of Parliament."

At that meeting, Municipal Manager Grant Easton and Mayor Wolmarans openly addressed concerns regarding Knysna Tourism, the ISDF tender award, the Municipal Manager appointment and the blocking of communication. Any irregularity in the first three were emphatically denied. For the last, Mr. Easton pointed out that he had unblocked Hampton’s emails as soon as he had taken over governance of the town.

"Parliament has currently been on a three-week break," informed Mr. Easton. "We do not know if we will have to attend again or if answering questions by email will suffice. We are hoping that Parliament doesn’t waste any more of your ratepayers’ money. The last trip was expensive, a further waste because several members of our delegation never got to speak at all. At least our tour of Parliament was insightful and enjoyable. However, we would rather encourage people to holiday in Knysna."

Executive Mayor Wolmarans continued with: "We denied Hampton a meeting for several years because we believed that no answers would satisfy him. We believe that his goal is to blemish local government for reasons he hasn’t declared. His blogging suggests a political motive supporting a third party.

However, at a recent meeting with MEC Alan Winde and MP Jaco Londt, it was suggested that we speak to Hampton and bury this matter once and for all. We suspect that it will not remain buried for Hampton but we can hope that it’ll be buried in the eyes of the public."

A team of people from local government will meet Mr. Hampton on April 8. This will include previous directors of Knysna Tourism, the Mayoral Committee, Corporate Services Manager Bevan Ellman and Legal Services Manager Melony Paulsen. There will also be an as yet to be decided upon observer from the Western Cape Government.

They will answer which questions they can and then gather whatever other information is needed, hopefully before Parliament questions again.

The Knysna Municipality and the Democratic Alliance reconfirmed their commitment to good governance, truth and transparency.
Maybe the joke press release was believable because almost everything in it about their bad behaviour was true.

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I remind that Knysna Knews is Advocate Seton and her married partner Deputy Mayor Esme Edge). They posted:

"Folks, it is the first of April - April Fools' day! This is obviously not a genuine muni press release. The communications manager's name is not even correctly spelled in the alleged "press release". The Municipality have wasted enough money on a disaffected individual. This is just another attention-seeking ploy, calculated to make the council look bad. History has proven meetings achieve nothing. Hopefully somebody will take steps regarding the usage of the logo and infringement of copyright."

Knysna Knews said that I should be sued for infringement of copyright for using the Municipality's logo. It's was another example of the fundamental mistake that had been made from the beginning. These despots and wannabe despots had grossly failed to realise that the Government is us, the People, and that municipal staff are our employees working in the building we provide. It's our fucking logo. South Africa belongs to all of. Knysna isn't an exception because a handful of entitled people drink wine together.

In the comment section, Mark Beard expressed his ignorance of citizen rights by wishing for my death again: “I hated the movie The English Patient. Towards the end of the movie, I was shouting, 'Die, just DIE!!!' I feel the same today.”

Ashley Barnes liked his attitude again.

Theirs and other reactions were to be expected but I was disappointed that a few of my supporters thought I’d deceived them. So I spelt it out the same afternoon, under the header, 'My April Fools' Joke to Fight THEIR Manipulation of YOU':

Over the past 5 years, do you associate the DA and the Knysna Municipality more with truth or lies, open doors or closed doors, Public interest of self-interest?

This morning I announced that Mayor Georlene Wolmarans and Municipal Manager Grant Easton, along with others, had decided to finally meet with me and answer my questions before Parliament returned from holidays.
That was an April Fools’ joke motivated by good reason. I made the words very close to what you’re used to reading on social media. I defaced myself at the start, thinking that my enemies would love that and be fooled a bit longer.

In this blog, I explain my intentions. Hopefully you will see it’s worth, have a chuckle, dig into thought, and forgive me if need be.

For years, the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Knysna Municipality have pushed out the lie that they were cooperative with me and that my only intention was to be unreasonable. I’ve heard it again and again and again and again... as you have too. The trick to effective propaganda is repetition. Some of you undoubtedly believe them... yet who of you have ever seen evidence supporting their version of events.

The biggest early question/request that has never been fulfilled was my wanting a breakdown of Knysna Tourism’s finances so that we, the Public, could clearly see who had benefited from an organisation that was repeatedly run into the red. The need for transparency was compounded by their lack of supply chain management processes, that Public funds were being illegally used to fill the holes, and that politicians (the people we’re supposed to trust) were on the Board of Directors, supposedly to provide oversight.

Accompanying that local government lie of cooperation, communication with me was banned – that was an unconstitutional act.

With my presentation of allegations of corruption to Parliament, the campaign against me (by some DA constituents and their associates) shifted into overdrive. On social media, nasty-driven pages called Knysna Knews, Hampton Factor, Protecting Brand Knysna and AngryMikeH attacked me. Instead of our leaders being horrified at the manner in which these sites have operated, some instead supported them, lie after lie.

The Knysna-Plett Herald repeatedly refused to deliver fair reporting, giving the DA and the Knysna Municipality a vast amount of biased coverage.

In Parliament, Easton tried to dodge a bullet by saying that he had unbanned me, as if all was well and no one was to blame. That was a falsehood because, I assume, that unbanning of my final edress took place only so that he could tell Parliament that... but who takes responsibility for the 4 years before?

Effectively, I remain banned because they will not answer my questions.
The other lie, one of disproportion, was with regards the costs of the Municipality attending Parliament. That has been repeated *ad nauseam*. It has been another form of attempting to manipulate you.

’An *argumentum ad nauseam* is the logical fallacy that something becomes true if it is repeated often enough. An ad nauseam argument that can be easily shown to be false leads to the point refuted a thousand times.

Due to the modern 24-hour cable news cycle and the fact every idiot now has a blog, *argumentum ad nauseam* has become particularly prevalent. In politics it is usually used in the form of a talking point, which is then reduced to a three second sound bite and is repeated at every available opportunity. On the blogosphere it takes the form of a meme, where every like-minded blogger repeats a statement used by a fellow blogger. Twitter, where every message has to be less than 140 characters, has only made this latter form of viral propaganda worse.

*Repeating an opinion again and again seems to convince people that it is true - maybe because it simulates the effect of many people having that opinion.*’

*Source –* [RationalWiki](http://www.rationalwiki.org).

If anyone is to blame it is our leaders! If they had chosen to be transparent, we would not have reached this point. There would be no costs. In fact, honesty would have led to action. Action would have stopped money, your money, being thrown into a black hole.

Despite their attendance having taken place 16 days ago, they have not detailed their expenses. If they ever do, ask yourself how could the one-day travel costs of 4 people ever be unreasonable considering how serious this situation is? If they’d gone in one car, petrol, wear and tare, and meals would have cost approximately R3,500 for the return trip. If it’d been by plane, the cost would’ve been around R17,000.

How does it compare to the tens of millions we’ve lost with regards Cornuti’s, Knysna Tourism, the failed forensics examination of the traffic department, the ISDF, the rates battle lost against Phantom Pass etc.

I am seemingly blamed for everything that goes wrong in Knysna, as if I’m the
greatest activist and blogger who ever lived, a successful subversive working for a third force to destabilise Knysna – WHAT POPPYROT.

The truth is that THEY DON’T WANT YOU TO KNOW THE TRUTH...

...and they’ve escalated that to dirty level...

They never chose to communicate or be people of positive action. Instead, they punched me again and again with court cases, all seemingly orchestrated by a family member of someone high in our government. Instead of answering questions, they seemingly abused the court system, knowing I had no legal knowledge and no money to fight them...

...but they never expected me to start learning and keep fighting. Have no doubt that it has been as difficult as hell for me. I’ve come so close, so many times, to falling apart or off the edge of the earth. I’m still here, motivated by my stubbornness to gain justice and by the help some of you have given me.

So, today, I played an April Fools’ joke. It was as serious and meaningful as I could make an April Fools’ joke be. It’s a joke on them for the absolute absurdity of their actions and non-actions. Secondly, it was an intended representation of the Public will – what you want.

That last part was my hope in you, the regular folk of Knysna. I was betting that you wanted an end to conflict, that you want to know what’s happening in our town and feel comfortable that good leaders are in the driving seat.

My hope came true. Over 2000 of you viewed the Facebook post today, many made comments, mostly supportive, and 94 have so far clicked the Like button on FB and Knysna Keep. YOU CLEARLY WANT SERIOUS MATTERS SORTED IN AN ADULT FASHION.

Predictably, those propaganda pages (Not) Protecting Brand Knysna and (Biased) Knysna Knews had the usual malcontents sharing their small-minded, defamatory nastiness that aims to do anything but fix the mess we’re in. Remember who the people behind those pages are. Remember that it was me, not them, that revealed their identities.

I ask that you compare my words to theirs, not just today’s but with regards every politically orientated opinion you can find. Extend that questioning to the articles of the Knysna-Plett Herald and the press releases of the Knysna Municipality.
Do not allow yourself to be manipulated. Demand better.

And make fun of our local government until it becomes the serious, trustworthy institution we need it to be!

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The Knysna Municipality published 'This joke is no laughing matter':

"Although media outlets throughout the world traditionally publish fake articles for April Fool’s day, an attempt by local blogger Mike Hampton to do the same falls short of this proud tradition.

It has come to light that his post of 1 April on LoveKnysna.com titled “Mayor Wolmarans to Meet Mike Hampton” was meant as an April Fool’s joke. In the opening paragraph he asserts: "I hope readers realise that this is more damage control than genuine attention. The Mayor admits that it’s not her decision but from higher up… Nevertheless, I will approach the meeting with genuine intention – we need to clean up the past and paint a better future."

Knysna Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans says: "We at the municipality do not find it funny at all and view it as yet another veiled attempt to spread rumour and misinformation to the public. It was done in bad taste and crosses the line. Many people mistakenly took it as fact, when it was actually devoid of any truth."

Mr Hampton later admitted in the comments that "it is a joke with good reasoning which will be explained next week.” With this statement it is obvious he is not in touch with the spirit and standard practice of the tradition which requires that the post be retracted by noon.

"By not removing the post and fuelling the fire with his comments, Mr Hampton has revealed his motives as deliberately negative and provocative. It is now nothing more than asinine lies,” adds Mayor Wolmarans before continuing: “It would seem his followers are not impressed by his tactics either.”

On the LoveKnysna Facebook page, the comments quickly turned negative when it came to light that it is fake with comments ranging from “April Fools joke. I hope not,” to “Ill placed April fools joke... sadly” and “I suggest no more April fools jokes from you Mike...” with another person commenting “If, on the other hand, it is a joke, it is no wonder he has such bad press” and “Well done Mike. This is a foolproof way to diminish your support base”.

Same Shit, Different Government: Book 1 – The Corruption & The Intimidation
A local media consultant, who wishes to remain anonymous, says: “This sort of thing is unacceptable and unduly embarrasses the people who he is targeting.”

Main stream media outlets usually take the mickey out of the general populous without becoming personal. This year, Independent Newspapers had an article on the licensing of bicycles, which is a classic example of this tradition. Similarly, Netwerk24 had a story on the Queen issuing a decree that English may longer be used as an official language in South Africa.

Both of these were full of hyperbole, absurdity and humour being obviously fake at closer inspection. Mr Hampton’s article is not and could be construed as libellous.”

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The Municipality ignored my comment on their Facebook that they had, as usual, failed to present the full story.

My subscribers can criticise me but what the Municipality did was to redact them into politically motivated propaganda advantage. They also ignored that Seton had been negatively involved and criticised by the same subscribers they were quoting.

Note more from the same comment thread, the difference between what the Municipality quoted and the more that was said:

Municipality's version of Wendy Dewberry: "Ill placed April Fool's joke... sadly... I suggest no more April fools jokes from you Mike...”

vs

Wendy Dewberry: “Ill placed April fools joke... sadly. Or maybe not... I dunno. It does raise the points... I suggest no more April fools jokes from you Mike.” And when Seton tried to insult, Dewberry said: “Our understanding of the illness within Knysna Municipality is not through Mike... there is no duping going on. Please do not make the error of assuming this is an issue of one person pulling the wool over people's eyes. No one who supports Mike believes what we believe because of what he says. If you check our demographic you would see that we are not uneducated. We believe what he fights for because we have seen this ourselves and, in law, the public has a right to transparency. He is just the one with nothing to lose, the one who can come against the impunitable Municipality without threat to child and dollar.”

And for the other subscriber who was also quoted twice:
Municipality’s version of Patrick Sodoff: “If, on the other hand, it is a joke, it is no wonder he has such bad press... Well done Mike. This is a foolproof way to diminish your support base.”

vs

Patrick Sodoff: “If, on the other hand, it is a joke, it is no wonder he has such bad press... Well done Mike. This is a foolproof way to diminish your support base... Esme Edge has hardly been daubed with the claim that she 'has been accused of single handedly destroying Knysna.' [as Hampton was by Knysna Knews]. Not by a long shot. And for an advocate [Seton], personally involved in many of these cases, to be hurling cheap shots like 'libellous schmuck' on a publicly accessible website, invites all kinds of retribution... These 'revelations' by Hampton are not all without foundation, not by a long shot. Many responsible citizens would readily agree that Hampton's assertions to the Parliament sitting have, at the very least, some merit, and Seton's protestations do not sound to normal, rational, suspicious human beings like those of someone confident of her position... Seton's advice to [a subscriber] to 'start using her own mind judiciously' is basically saying: If you don't agree with us, then your mind is not being applied. The mere fact that Seton is publicly airing the washing gives rise to the very important question: Is she protesting too much?”

The DA-led Municipality was mocking me without realising they were mocking the idea that they would ever meet me to discuss serious issues. They were against the open-door policy they claimed to practice. They were unable to see that important summary.

That's what my post was about, that they’d failed to communicate fairly and openly, and address serious issues of maladministration and corruption. That was no laughing matter. It was one of the reasons why we were in Parliament together.

And for Government to quote an anonymous “local media consultant” was pathetic. I've already pointed out some of that kind involved in the campaign against me.

The use of 'consultants' was an ongoing concern because, essentially, the Municipality could use taxpayers’ money to hurt me and for cover-up. Note how evasive Communications Manager Christopher Bezuidenhout was with regards who was sharing his job.

The month before, in between political offices, Michelle Wasserman commented online
about the coming elections that: "REGISTER FOR CHANGE is an odd slogan for the DA to use in a DA-led municipality."

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I pretended they were good people. They responded that I was wrong to do so. Painfully hilarious. They deserved to be parodied.

As homage to cruel, Government insanity, this book was published on 1 April 2019, the national holiday for politicians.
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Mayor Wolmarans to Meet Mike Hampton
I hope readers realise that this is damage control and not genuine attention. It's taken them years to get... knysnakeep.org