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**The Grateful Dead  
The Zeroes Are Back, and They Have Offspring!  
Letters from Zimbabwe  
By Mwana Wevhu  
BlackCommentator.com Columnist**

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*BC welcomes Mwana Wevhu (a pen name which means "son of the soil") as a columnist and cartoonist. His writings and cartoons will appear on a regular basis.*

### **The Grateful Dead**

The National Incomes and Pricing Commission (NIPC) was set up to control the high rise of prices, but has so far failed dismally, as prices now go up literally every hour.

Two years ago the government unilaterally lowered prices of every product to such ridiculous levels that thousands of businesses collapsed as people literally besieged wholesalers, retailers, and other businesses, buying off as much as they could. The police were overwhelmed by the crowds and ended up joining the melee.

A few weeks later, there was literally nothing on the shelves, as businesses could not restock due to their losses.

Now two weeks ago, the government declared that people were now free to buy goods using foreign currency.

But customers are complaining. The prices are too high, even by Zimbabwe's "normal" black market rates. Even some Zimdollar prices are way beyond crazy. A small packet of biscuits costs Z\$1300 000 (One million three hundred thousand dollars) in a country where a school teacher earns about Z\$100 000. He would have to work for thirteen months to be able to afford it!

Incidentally, I bought the same packet of biscuits in Mozambique for Z\$10,000 a few days ago...

But I digress.

The chairman of the above mentioned NIPC Goodwills Masimirembwa has said Zimbabweans should stop complaining and not expect to buy imported goods at prices similar to those prevailing in other countries, adding that since "Zimbabwe was not manufacturing the goods ... it was inevitable for them to be more expensive"

"Consumers should be grateful that instead of travelling to other countries, they are now able to buy these goods locally," he helpfully concluded.

Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) president Callisto Jokonya was on cue: "When shops start restocking, things will be okay and prices will come down eventually."

Good Lord, Goodwills, that's what Herbert Murerwa said about six years ago.

### **The Zeroes Are Back, and They Have Offspring!**

10:03AM, Saturday, 11 Oct, 2008 The overwhelmed governor has just introduced a new Z\$50 000 only two weeks after introducing the Z\$10 000 and Z\$20 000 notes.

And the "good news" is withdrawal limit has been more than doubled. From Monday. We expect the usual loooooooooooooooooooooong queues, and the "no cash" scenario to prevail.

Only two months after lopping off the zeroes from our currency (thirteen have been removed so far), it looks like Zimbabwe's zeroes are back with a vengeance.

A loaf of bread is now Z\$7000 on the black market.

Judging by the picture in today's front page of the Herald, Zimbabweans are in for another dull-looking, worthless note. The notes are so similar and unimaginatively designed it is easy to mistake a ten or twenty thousand dollar note for a thousand dollar note, and I have made this mistake several times. It will not be different with the new note. The caption says "its security features include a colour shift stripe with the initials RBZ, the Zimbabwe Bird colour shift on the front and see through"50 000" on either side which are in perfect register". No other security features are, ahem, mentioned.

Your governor, as Gono likes to call himself, is a man endowed with a sense of humour. "Our financial sector is in a healthy, solid condition and is expected to ride the current harsh tide."

Yeah, right.

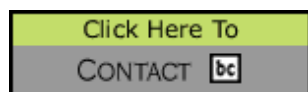
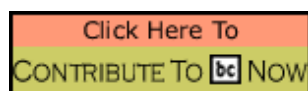
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