

'Untruthful' Roberts in oil deal spat

Accusations fly as another friendship goes south

STEPHAN HOFSTATTER

THE "unlikeable" Ronald Suresh Roberts is embroiled in another spat — this time over oil deals with a company that belongs to relatives of Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke.

A "broke" Roberts had a spectacular falling out with his former benefactor, Judge Moseneke's brother Tiego, over his role as an oil concession wheeler and dealer for a company called the Encha Group.

Encha is a politically connected consortium with various energy, property, mining and telecoms interests.

Roberts told the Sunday Times this week that he had helped "Judge Moseneke's company" broker a potentially lucrative swap of its disputed prospecting rights to oilfields in the Democratic Republic of Congo with "actual, undisputed, oil-producing assets" in his Caribbean homeland, Trinidad and Tobago.

Encha is owned by Tiego Moseneke and cousin Gontse Moseneke. Judge Moseneke controls a family trust that holds an 18% stake in Encha.

But Roberts claims the Moseneke family shamelessly exploited political connections to clinch the deal.

"Judge Moseneke's company (specifically through Tiego Moseneke) induced the then minister of minerals and energy, Buyelwa Sonjica, to travel to Trinidad and Tobago to assist the ambitions of Judge Moseneke's company," he told the Sunday Times.

"The minister and Tiego Moseneke duly travelled there



TITILLATING PROSPECT: Suresh Roberts Picture: MUNTU VILAKAZI

in November 2008. However, Encha's inability to deliver undisputed title to their alleged DRC oil rights subsequently derailed the intended negotiation."

The Mosenekes declined to discuss the matter with the Sunday Times other than to concur with a ruling by the Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration that branded Roberts a liar.

"Mr Roberts's averments were found to be false and untruthful by the CCMA, and were thus rejected," said Gontse Moseneke. "I trust that you find this in order."

Tiego told the CCMA that he had hired a "broke" Roberts in 2008 because he thought Roberts should "do something to earn his keep" after he kept pestering him for cash.

A year earlier the Cape High Court had ordered him to cough up R1-million in legal fees plus interest when he lost a lawsuit against the Sunday Times for publishing an article entitled "The Unlikeable Mr Roberts".

In February the CCMA rejected Roberts's unfair dismissal claim because he had failed to show he'd been an Encha employee rather than an independent contractor.

The ruling found Roberts "evasive and untruthful". By contrast, Tiego, who had previously been struck from the roll of attorneys for misappropriating trust fund money, was described as a "a good witness".

Asked how he felt about being branded a liar, Roberts said the commissioner's decision was "irrational and reviewable". He has applied to the Labour Court to have it set aside.

He declined to explain how he could claim to be a full-time employee of Encha when he had worked from his flat with a laptop, and never had UIF or PAYE deducted from his earnings.

"I do not litigate by partisan media," he said. He also denied he is or was broke — "however titillating that prospect".

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STEADY INFLATION: The 33rd South African Hot Air Balloon Championships held at Bethlehem in the Free State this week attracted international directors and participants. Robertas Komza, rom Lithuania, took first place Picture: TEBOGO LETSIE

Probe into R50m water-meter contracts

SHANAAZ EGGINGTON

A FORENSIC investigation is miter way into a R50-million project to manage the flow of water piped to residents of Cape Town.

water a day. The amount can be set to only the free 6kl (200l a day) or higher.

Tenders worth over R50-million were awarded to the three companies and other firms responsible for installing them

Zille, now premier of the Western Cape, in April 2009.

The union alleged that administrative malpractices may have been involved in the awarding of contracts.

Mashoko said the city ulti-

IN BRIEF

DOUBLE TROUBLE: The Western Cape head of police union Poperu is facing a double dose of trouble — for drunk driving.

Francisco Fields is due to appear in the Wynberg Magistrate's Court on Thursday.

GRANNY NABBED: A 60-year-old woman was arrested on Friday night for allegedly assaulting a Metro cop in Rosebank, Johannesburg. The unidentified woman, who