



## **PRESIDENTIAL PROMISES - PROJECTS AND PLANS GALORE**

### **THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

President Ramaphosa's State of the Nation (SONA) address on 11 February in Cape Town revealed something South Africa has known for a long time – it's the private sector that has kept the country afloat since the takeover of the ANC government in 1994.

Comments from the country's economic fundi and political commentators after the SONA speech were, in the main, favourable. Some were even euphoric! The president wants to work together with business to create jobs and advance the economy. Commentators declared that the president realised his government had achieved little with its corrupt, incompetent, and overpaid army of civil servants. What many failed to point out however is that the ANC policy committee of cadre deployment was chaired by none other than president Ramaphosa from 2012 to 2017. Since then, he has had a watching brief within the same committee. This was revealed during the president's testimony at the recent Zondo Commission enquiry into state capture. The function of this ANC deployment committee was to ensure that party loyalists would be employed in civil service jobs as a bulwark against "sabotage" by others, as former president Thabo Mbeki put it so succinctly!

The moment of truth hit the ANC hard after the recent municipal elections. For the first time, the ANC received less than 50% of the vote although millions continued to support the worst government the country has ever had! Why this is so beggars' comprehension: many reasons for these voters' continual, even blind, support was proffered, some emotional, most illogical. They voted out of loyalty to a party that had let them down spectacularly, something that would never have happened in a developed society. But South Africa is stuck with this phenomenon, and one wonders when this love affair will eventually sour!

South African business is acknowledged to be sitting on mountains of cash, and this "working together" narrative sounds very attractive to those state

employees who would retain their positions and comfortable salaries while “participating” in joint ventures to “move the country forward”. There was praise all round for this apparent change of heart by the president, but it was a canny move on his part – he knew he and his party could possibly not survive the next election and he needs the vote of the state workers who are in their jobs courtesy of the ANC’s deployment committee.

The nuts and bolts of these proposed joint ventures were not spelt out. How would it all work? How would private sector companies be chosen to work on the hundreds of tasks needed to resuscitate the country? Would they need to be BEE compliant, meaning there would be a “deployed” component within these private companies? Who would pay the accounts and manage the books in a joint venture? Who would make management decisions? Would a private sector company have carte blanche to go ahead without interference from the government? Would black-owned companies demand to be considered as part and parcel of the private sector? And will the government create the political and physical climate to make it easy for private companies to accomplish their tasks within a crumbling infrastructure, where the harbours don’t function, the country’s railways have either disappeared or are non-existent, and where water and electricity supplies are dodgy?

What about law and order? Could July 2021 occur again and, if so, who would control the rabble? More than 300 people were killed during that rampage but none of the perpetrators have been brought to book. Will SASRIA be replenished from its present hollowed out state in case there are more insurrections and businesses are targeted?

Then there’s the question of the SA Police Service. They were nowhere to be seen in July last year. Will Commissioner Cele’s head roll? It appears not as he is, according to many media commentators, untouchable. His political weight and influence are more important than law and order to the president, it seems. Has the assassin of the Rio Tinto CEO at Richards Bay been apprehended? What security is offered to other captains of industry who may make uncomfortable business demands of the ANC, some of whose members may be prepared to sabotage the president’s plans for cooperation with the private sector.

## **THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM**

Would the president be prepared to disband his cadre deployment policy and replace it with a merit-based civil service? This is the elephant in the room. This problem must be solved before the country can move forward towards any realisation of the plans for co-opting the private sector. Business cannot work

with water pollution, with no service delivery, with a shaky and unreliable electricity supply and recalcitrant municipal cadres who don't even answer the phone, let alone do anything constructive. This pernicious deployment policy must be wiped off the books before business will invest in any government undertaking - it is the incompetence of the cadres appointed by president Ramaphosa over the years that have singlehandedly helped to destroy South Africa's infrastructure and, by definition, its economy.

Are there any signs that this policy will be reviewed by the president? None at present it appears. He's been talking about reforming this discrimination for years, alluding to "fairness" and to "renewal" of the civil service and of choosing "qualified" people for the jobs. But the policy persists. TLU SA has published numerous examples from 2019 onwards where he talks of fairness in employment, about putting quality people into positions of responsibility. The president admitted the existence of malfunctioning municipalities in his pre-election speeches last year. He declared he will "strengthen local government so that all basic services will be properly delivered. Therefore, the people will vote for us!" (Beeld 30.10.21)

But he speaks with forked tongue. He doesn't intend to change the deployment policy any time soon, if at all. The national newspaper Rapport's career supplement Sunday 13 February 2022 reveals that advertisements for every state job, without exception, bore the caveat that the advertisers are "equal opportunity affirmative action employers". These ads for posts include Northern Cape Province Transport, Safety and Liaison Department; the Mopani District Municipality; the Makhodo Municipality; Ehlanzani District Municipality; Amajuba Municipality; Greater Kokstad Municipality; the Department of Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation; the uMkhanyakwe municipality; the Department of Human Settlements; Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality; the Department of Science and Innovation; the North West University; the Joe Morolong Municipality (full page ad); the Department of Higher Education and Training; the Education, Training and Development Practices SETA; the Merafong City Local Municipality, and the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services. The remaining advertisements ask readers to "consult our website". It's possible they are also Employment Equity participants.

## **CONFRONT THE PRESIDENT!**

Why doesn't business confront the president on these anomalies? Why don't they make the discontinuation of the cadre deployment policy a condition for exploring the president's suggestion of working with the private sector to save South Africa's economy?

TLU SA agrees that the president is correct in focusing on economic growth as a panacea for unemployment. But the president's talk of creating a climate within which this goal can be realised is not cut and dried. "The government's policy environment is not one that creates confidence for the private sector," says Bennie van Zyl, TLU SA's general manager. Problems of cadre deployment, Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), corruption and the like are huge barriers to investment. "The looting of public finances at all levels and the ANC's commitment to an ideology within which the SACP and Cosatu participate has only created poverty and sadness," says van Zyl.

This time the president must walk the walk instead of talking the talk. Numerous editorials have commented on this problem for years now. "Time for dreaming is over, Mr. President. There's work to be done". (Sunday Times 23 June 2019). "Ramaphosa is managing our decline. SA has never been a master of its own destiny" (Sunday Times Peter Bruce April 18,2021). "Deeds not words will solve the ANC's problem". (Beeld 13 October 2021). "Connect the words with the deeds, Mr. President". (Beeld 1 October 2021).

Can the president give us what we deserve: a clean, functioning country in line with so many others in the developed world? Or will he succumb to the pressure that will inevitably come from the mentally challenged in his party who still believe in the revolutionary humbug that has sentenced a beautiful country to poverty, malfunction, and economic strain? The fact that these people don't know what they don't know is irrelevant in their haste to take power on their terms. Will the president rid South Africa of a police chief that is not only useless but dangerous to the security of the country? Will the president have the courage to fire the incompetents in the civil service and replace them with people who know how to do the job at hand? His actions will prove the president's mettle.