



IT'S STILL THE SAME OLD STORY.....

The song "As Time Goes By", composed in 1931 by American Herman Hupfeld, was the signature tune in the 1942 film hit "Casablanca" starring Humphrey Bogart. The song continues to enchant - it has stood the test of time and is still played around the world. "It's still the same old story" was a key line in the melody, and this "same old story" modus operandi appears to be president Cyril Ramaphosa's strategy as he pens his regular speeches with which he hopes to pacify a very restive electorate. The same message is being sent out again and again.

A pattern has emerged – the president's epistles are strong in promise, emotive in tone but they are basically the same old words shuffled around a bit, with some tweaking here and there. Public memory has always been known to be short, and South Africa is no exception. The president has so far got away with his repeat messages. But in light of the vacuity and similarity of the president's speeches over the past few years, let us backtrack and scrutinise them for content.

In a pre-election speech in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town in May 2019, the president said that "it is wrong that people seeking work should be asked to state their race on a work application form, and this practice from the past must be done away with". He declared he wanted to emphasise that the "ANC is completely committed to non-racialism. We do not want to see any form of discrimination. We are all children of South Africa. The ANC will work hard to rid job applicants of the need to fill in their race on forms". He continued: "Now that we have freedom, we cannot say that some people can be more advantaged over others".

Yet up to today, media advertisements for national, provincial and local authority jobs state unequivocally that they are "equal opportunity employers subscribing to the Equal Employment Act which promotes representivity in respect of race, gender and disability through the filling of positions offered". The Modimolle-Mookgophong Local Municipality's ad of 17 January 2021, the Mpumalanga Provincial government ad and the Department of Agriculture

and Rural Development ad, all of the same date, state these conditions of employment.

The president is thus talking hocus pocus. In early December 2020, the president declared that he cannot allow municipalities to collapse. Local government has “many challenges”, he opines. He went on to lament the collapse of so many municipalities. He said there was a shortage of “capacity” (the South African euphemism for ability to do the job in hand!) and that we cannot allow this situation to continue!

This was followed by lamentable newspaper editorials stating that his statement was a “step in the right direction” and that the president said it would be “taboo” to take on unqualified municipal councillors in the future. But there was no further “step in the right direction”. Nothing changed. It was just vacuous verbiage! This same president declared in his 8 January 2021 statement issued by the ANC's National Executive Committee that “only capable cadres should be in positions of responsibility so that they can contribute to efficient governance”. He admitted that there were still “backlogs” in the delivery of electricity, water, sanitation, housing and infrastructure. Maladministration “must be tackled” he said. As an afterthought, he attributed this collapse of South Africa under his party's watch to the “inequalities of the past”!

RE-RUNS

The President's current speeches are re-runs of previous speeches. They are promises and plans about which he has not the slightest intention of taking any action. Maybe the hapless millions who vote for his party every election are taken in by this hogwash, but others are getting used to his chicanery. All he is interested in is his party's holding on to power, with himself as president. By his non-action in allowing competent people to apply for state and municipal jobs, he is perpetuating the collapse of South Africa.

Does the president know what is going on in his country? Why have the police lost control of law and order? Why is theft of public money going on day after day? Why are the borders open for all and sundry, despite ridiculous R37 million chicken wire fences? Why does the president not do something about the problems? What does he do every day? Testimony before the Zondo commission reveals the breathtaking plunder of this country while the president was a senior member of the ANC, then vice president. He was a member of parliament for years. Commission judge Zondo remarked recently he was surprised that the plunder carried on under the noses of members of Parliament was left unchecked. A media report on 27 January 2021 says Panyaza Lesufi,

Gauteng MEC for Education has asked the Auditor General to investigate an amount of R431 million paid to cleaning contractors who had no competence to perform the job allocated to them and that it is “not clear” when and where the schools are that were supposed to be sanitised.

We are used to such corruption – what is not acceptable is Mr. Lesufi’s “shock” at this incompetence and theft. Isn’t he supposed to be supervising his department? Didn’t he check out these so-called contractors? What is HE doing all day to protect taxpayers’ money? In the end the buck stops with the president. Clearly the president and his chums in government haven’t the faintest idea how to run this country. The president has also said on more than one occasion he was “shocked” to hear about some or other theft/mismanagement catastrophe.

TALKERS NOT DOERS

One thing we have learned about the ANC, apart from their reputation as thieves and plunderers, is that they are hopeless at managing anything. But they are great talkers. They love meetings and conventions and sitting around a table and discussing reports and setting up commissions of enquiry. But they are useless because they do nothing afterwards. Yet they prevent people who can set the country right from doing so. Even their political allies such as the trade union Cosatu complained that after a recent three day lekgotla (convention), no tangible decisions were made. It was all talk and eating and relaxing in the bush lodge.

Liberal columnist Peter Bruce who for years supported the ANC and who was bamboozled by President Ramaphosa’s purported reasonableness and sincerity now says that things now happening “make you realise just how thin a veneer of normality our government offers us. If there were no private sector in South Africa, we would simply be unable to function as a society”. He refers to “online meetings” between the president and his cabinet, where this one talks for an hour followed by another one for an hour and a half, followed by someone else. “Before you know it it’s 8.00 pm” says Bruce.

“To the ministers, this is work”, says Bruce. There is no actual engagement or conversation. It’s only presentation. “This government is simply incapable of methodical deliberate action”, he says. Regarding the subject of Covid vaccinations now under discussion by the government, Bruce says “there is no way it can vaccinate the 40 million citizens Ramaphosa says we need inoculated by the end of the year”. In other words it’s talk without any logical thought behind it. Says Bruce: “The biggest and best distribution network in the country belongs to South African Breweries. But their products are now banned

and they are taking the government to court and cutting back on big investments." So who is going to carry out the millions of vaccinations promised by the president?

Many knew forty years ago South Africa would be faced with this type of problem when talk of "negotiations" was in the air. But those then riding the wave of expectations of world approbation and SA's rejoining the "international community" ruled the day. South Africa unleashed the ANC genie from the bottle and now we live with the result.

TLU SA members decided some time ago to look after themselves, to farm as they know how and to avoid government interference. Others in the private sector are doing the same, working to repair municipal structures, setting up private companies to handle the many facets of South African life the ANC has destroyed. We are a citizenry picking up the pieces.

Who then can stop the corruption and the maladministration? Certainly not President Ramaphosa's ANC. He talks of land expropriation, and "transformation" and whatever comes to his mind at a particular moment in front of a particular audience. He and his party are looking after themselves. Elections are their priority right now. Anything else in their political rhetoric is just hot air.