

## **Budget Debate on Vote 1: The Presidency**

**Speech by Zak Mbhele MP**

**DA Shadow Minister in the Presidency**

### ***Ramaphosa's New Dawn has turned into a nightmare***

Mr President, it is now just over five years since you assumed office, an occasion which was heralded as marking a sharp break from the 'lost decade' of the Zuma years, but what you promised us was meant to be a New Dawn has instead turned out to be a Dim Dusk.

Many were hopeful for the much-needed changes that they expected you would usher in, and indeed willing to be patient because they understood the extent and severity of the challenges at hand, and the difficult political factors and dynamics you had to take into account.

It was said that you were having to be careful and cautious about how you went about fixing what was wrong in government because you were in a precarious position within the governing party, having won the ANC presidency in 2017 with a razor-thin margin, and needing to work with a party executive that was evenly split between your supporters and detractors.

And yet, after having been re-elected in a more secure position as ANC president in December last year, we are yet to see this bold, confident and decisive leadership that such a change was supposedly meant to enable.

The latest demonstration of this weak leadership was the appointment of a Minister of Electricity in the Presidency because, rather than take the politically risky action of firing and replacing Minister Mantashe for his obstructivism with energy sector reform, you opted to bypass that leadership responsibility by creating yet another ministry, to which you transferred responsibility for procuring

new power generation capacity. In fact, by looking at several other examples, one could easily define your presidency as being one of always 'transferring responsibility and passing the buck'.

The recent Cabinet reshuffle and additional ministerial appointments have continued the established trend of an ever-growing super-Presidency, whose inflation seems set to rival that of food and fuel inflation that are driving the cost of living crisis for households across the country, and which seems set to reflect the bloated bureaucracy of 'millionaire managers' in public administration.

This is all the result of an ANC in government that runs on cadre deployment and cronyism, wherein the Cabinet simply amounts to a cumbersome basket of patronage for accommodating and balancing ANC factions and power-players.

The New Dawn of 2018 was supposed to start a crackdown on corruption and crime, yet the Dim Dusk of 2023 shows stagnation on the part of investigative and prosecution authorities in relation to State Capture and COVID corruption, and recent crime stats show violence and violations perpetrated against often the most vulnerable people in communities ever on the rise.

The New Dawn of 2018 was the first glimmer of hope for a turnaround in our public education system so that vulnerable children in the most disadvantaged communities could have a better chance at future livelihoods, yet the Dim Dusk of 2023 has more than 80% of Grade 4 learners unable to read for meaning, that is when they're able to avoid falling into pit latrine toilets.

And finally, the New Dawn of 2018 which was expected to be the beginning of the end of Eskom's failures has instead, in this Dim Dusk of 2023, become a full-blown load-shedding crisis with the worst blackouts ever experienced in South Africa.

Over the past five years, we've been told promises, plans and supposed progress, yet all we've really got from you, Mr President, is pussyfooting on reform, Phala Phala and, in coming months, the 'Putin red carpet'.

Fortunately, in 2024, it will be the prime opportunity for the people to take back their power at the polls by supporting the Moonshot Pact, and send the ANC packing!