

Parliament is still fast asleep Madam Speaker, but the DA continues to work

By **Jacques Julius MP** – Deputy Chief Whip of the Democratic Alliance

Chairperson,

Allow me to congratulate and thank all Parliamentary staff for the swift action and innovation when the Covid-19 pandemic hit our country, these dedicated staff of Parliament step up to the plate. It is really appreciated.

During an appearance at the Zondo Commission a few weeks ago, the Speaker acknowledged that there was an impression that Parliament was asleep and that more resources are needed for Parliament operations in holding the Executive accountable. This was an extremely loaded statement that must be interrogated for us to hold the Executive of Parliament themselves accountable when it comes to the current budget vote and its implications for ordinary South Africans that want to see a Parliament of the people working for the people. With respect Madam Speaker, some in Parliament are still fast asleep when it comes to holding the Executive of this government accountable.

Met respek Agbare Speaker, die DA was nie aan die slaap nie. Die DA het vir Vader Jakob en sy “achusters” gereeld aangevat, in hierdie huis en selfs die howe. Die ANC was vas aan die slaap en ek twyfel of hulle enige tyd wakker gaan skrik!

Chairperson,

With programmes, targets and performance indicators skewed and outdated, we cannot seriously say Parliament is awake. Allow me to dig a bit deeper into this.

If you have a look at Programme 1, there are only two targets. This is not near to challenging our efforts to where we want Parliament to be. It also shows that the legal advice given to Parliament is very well executed within seven days. What about the quality of this legal advice. There is no performance indicator for this. These targets and performance indicators, Madam Speaker, will not wake up Parliament. Programme 2 is achieved, very well done.

The only problem is that it shows that only one UJ class was provided to members, very well done. The fact that Parliament is paying for members to study annually does not appear on any of the performance indicators. Programme 3 is also achieved but it ignores the fact that we had many challenges when it comes to translation and interpretation services for instance. This is yet again another example of doing things just to comply and not having a desire to excel. The other programmes are just as weak as the first three. This is a budget that will keep this 6th Parliament fast asleep and expected apologies over a few years to come.

Chairperson,

The Speaker also asked for more resources so that members can be better equipped to hold the Executive accountable. We have however seen a budget cut for Parliament. We can do our work in this Parliament with this budget. If only the ANC members can also do their bit in holding the Executive accountable. A good starting point will be to ask more uncomfortable written and verbal questions and stop with the sweetheart questions.

Chairperson,

Allow me make one contemporary example. There are allegations of fraud and corruption involving the minister of health as we speak, Zweli Mkhize, during a pandemic where South Africans are losing their lives and livelihoods. It is very serious. What is Parliament doing to hold him accountable? During her Freedom Day Speech this year, the Speaker herself promised that this institution would sharpen its oversight and hold ministers more accountable in the fight against corruption and looting of public resources. Where are the ethics complaints from this side of the house – the ANC members. It is all left up to the DA and other opposition parties represented in this house. This while the ANC members still protect their ministers. What did the presiding officers do to date in this regard to hold true to your commitment at the Zondo Commission and commitments during the Freedom Day speeches? How do you do more to hold this minister accountable? South Africans deserve a Parliament that deals swiftly with these allegations and not a Parliament that is asleep.

Parliament is fast asleep and will not be awakened any time soon if these things are not addressed. South African depend on Parliament to better their lives and livelihoods.

Die ANC het dieselfe gedoen toe Vader Jakob homself aan bewind was. Hulle het hom salute wanneer hy geweier het om verantwoordings te neem. Die ANC was aan die in slaap en ek twyfel of hulle ooit wakker sal skrik! Skrik, al is dit net wakker!

Baie dankie