

Budget Vote 31: Employment and Labour

Speech by Michael Bagraim MP, DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour

“ 29 WASTED YEARS” says Mr Vavi representing the largest trade union in South Africa. I personally go much further, “29 destructive years”. The Department of Employment and Labour have taken us down a very slippery slope almost three decades of job destruction. The Department has requested funds for its entities, the only one which is functional, is the CCMA. Not wanting to acknowledge this, the Department has announced that the CCMA is facing a budget cut. This is tantamount to “snatching defeat from the jaws of victory”. The other entities are shining examples of failure. For me to even try and comment on the Compensation Fund is an impossibility.

There have been no submissions of any nature put forward by the Compensation Fund. No wonder the workers of South Africa have been let down for years. A DA Government would immediately outsource the Compensation Fund to an external party to ensure that the injured workers with claims are sorted out as soon as possible. It will take a major effort of a DA Government to rebuild the Compensation Fund to deliver. A DA Government at the end of next year will proceed to restructure the Department to ensure service delivery.

During the past three years I’ve literally had to respond to over 12 000 complaints stretching from complaints from the Compensation Fund to just about every other entity within the Department. Even ANC Councillors have referred their queries to me because they have not been able to get responses from the dysfunctional and duplicitous Department. It is the height of cheek for the Minister of Employment and Labour to even try and get funding for some of his inactive entities.

Productivity SA has very carefully taken South Africa to the second lowest productivity rung in the world. We have spent millions and millions on Productivity SA to enable the rapid slide downhill. The three decades of destruction have left over eleven million citizens actively looking for jobs. This situation has been carefully orchestrated by this dubious Department of Employment and Labour. When a new DA led Government is sworn in to office next year it will mean a lot of hard work to regularise the situation and reverse the scorched earth policy practiced by the Department. When John F Kennedy took office he said “When we got into office, the thing that surprised me the most was that things were as bad as we’d been saying they were”. Despite this, the Democratic Alliance has faith in the system and the citizens of SA. Your vote is vital. We cannot have business as usual. The DA will ensure that the Department receives an urgent overhaul.

Like Alice Through the Looking Glass, the Minister wants the voters in South Africa to pretend all is well. It is not. You can only pretend when deliberating the budget for the Compensation Fund. They did not make a presentation to the Committee (likewise with the UIF). Productivity SA is supposed to promote a culture of productivity at the workplace and prevent job losses; the opposite is occurring, all the while costing the tax payers millions of rands. When the ANC finds itself in a hole, they keep digging. So what does the Minister suggest; give more and more to Productivity SA and reduce the budget for the CCMA. Who wrote the Minister’s script – John Cleese? The Minister certainly reminds me of Manuel from Faulty Towers “I know nothing”.

Business in South Africa today gets no help whatsoever from the Department of Employment and Labour. In fact, the Department is colloquially known as the handbrake to job creation. The recent SONA, at last, identified small business as the job creator. The SONA also identified that red tape was a hindrance. The Department of Employment and Labour should be the entity that had to take up those challenges. But no. Even a call from the President goes unanswered.

People in South Africa have all experienced the dysfunctionality of the Department of Employment and Labour; long queues, no payments, refusal to reply, rude officials, wrong calculations (I can go on). This experience is real and ongoing. It will not change under an ANC led Government. This experience of three decades of wasted and destroyed years can be changed. Vote for a functional, honest, competent and responsible DA led Government and change our lives for the better. Please exercise your vote to help yourself. The DA is showing what can be done. The Western Province Government is a great example. You as a voter need to imagine a better life for all. Your single vote will make that difference. Your vote for the DA will put you in control to ensure a DA Government answers your plea for more employment and everything that goes with it. The DA knows that harsh labour laws are killing jobs. The DA will enable you to empower yourself. Less Government, more jobs and true freedom. The DA has that formula for a better future.