

APDUSA VIEWS

Issue No. 98

April 2011

MAY 2011 ELECTIONS:

**No valid reason to
Abstain**

MISSING THE TRAIN!

Introduction

1994 was a landmark year in the history of this country. Formal political power was handed to all citizens of South Africa to be exercised within the context and confines of the new democratic constitution.

We observed and watched with unbelievable horror the direction and road taken by the ANC. We, in the Unity Movement have at all times relegated the leadership of the ANC to the company of the betrayers of the liberation struggles like the leaderships under Nehru, Banda and Kaunda, par excellence the stooges and hirelings of neo-colonialism. Initially, we simply nodded our heads knowingly because our accusations were being confirmed, not just in debates, but in real life.

Initially also, the ANC appeared to be invincible. It was everywhere and people simply voted for it because it symbolized the liberator from national and racial oppression. So great was its presence that there was an election when Nelson Mandela actually expressed the wish that the ANC would not achieve a two thirds majority because in the event of that happening, the radicals within the ANC would demand the amendment of the Constitution which dealt with the protection of property rights.

So great was its presence and power that people like Zuma were moved to say that the ANC would rule until Jesus returned to earth.

“The old order changeth....”

The fundamental law in life is the law of change. Nobody and nothing is exempt from it. The power of the ANC is no longer supreme. It has slipped in the political-constitutional sense. Firstly Cape Town fell to the DA led coalition. Then a number of municipalities. Then the entire Province of the Western Cape.

Side by side with the loss of political power in an entire province, the ANC suffered its greatest defeat when people openly revolted against it.

The issue was the failure of the ANC to effect service delivery to the people. The services were the basic ones like decent roads, proper schools, clean running water, electricity, housing, medical care. Add to that the mountains of complaints about rude and discourteous treatment by the police, the nurses, and the civil servants. ***Batho Pele*** the “people first” slogan was discarded so long ago that you would not find a copy even in the national archives.

The people had had ***enough!***

Service Delivery Protests

The first service delivery protests began about seven years ago. At first they were not taken seriously. The police were sent to deal with the protestors. When the

protests persisted and began spreading, the ANC used stop gap measures – promises and more promises. In their simplicity and trusting nature, people believed that the promises were going to be carried out.

So did the ANC leadership *until the latter realised that it had created a monster through patronage, cronyism and so-called cadre deployment over which it had no control.*

Those ANC members in the local municipalities entrusted with service delivery were not responding to or refused to carry out instructions.

So the promises remained unfulfilled.

And the people felt betrayed!

The toiling masses of this country have always been deprived of basic service delivery. They have been accustomed to that state of affairs all their lives. They would fight where oppression hurt them most – like the pass laws or increased bus tariffs or racial murders.

So what had changed since 2005 which made the once biggest supporters of the ANC now turn against it?

Two aspects at least:

1. The *making* of solemn promises by the top leadership of the ANC and the blatant *failure* to carry out those promises.

2. Those persons entrusted with the task of bringing the fruit of liberation to the people diverted that fruit to their homes, their families, friends, relatives and the army of hangers-on.

Nothing could be more stark. Yesterday they all suffered in poverty and denial. Today a very noticeable chunk has suddenly become rich and affluent beyond belief. Not just the high salary received as a councillor but the millions from the unlawful tenders and free handouts running into hundreds of millions to persons like Cyril Ramaphosa.

The riches were obscenely flaunted – luxury vehicles, palatial homes, children sent to the best schools, fashionable clothes, latest hair styles and shopping only where the “special people shop”.

The people were not slow in spotting the contradictions which denied them what they fought for over the centuries and for which they had shed oceans of their blood.

Both the contradictions can be summed up in one word -
CORRUPTION!

Corruption is the worst social disease created by human beings and encompasses a large variety of vices –

dishonesty,

theft,

lies,

cronyism and thence jobs and positions to people who do not have the skills to perform them,

cadre deployment

wilful failure to carry out functions for which one is employed,

stealing time from working hours,

outright theft of state resources from ball point pens to luxury motor vehicles,

inflating costs beyond fair and reasonable prices of items and equipment and contracts for material supplied and services rendered.

The list is endless!

Now the lack of service delivery is the direct result of corruption in its varied forms. There can be no argument about that.

If therefore service delivery is to be effected, there has to be the elimination of corruption.

Corruption is the **dominant contradiction** in the eyes of the majority of people.

People are moved, galvanized and rallied around the issue of a dominant contradiction.

The Democratic Alliance is the one party that has seen corruption as the dominant contradiction and has made the fight against corruption the heart of its long term strategy and as its rallying call.

Its track record in this respect is outstanding. In most of the municipalities it controls, it has been awarded top marks from the Auditor General.

In stark contrast to the ANC controlled municipalities, those municipalities under the rule of the DA are overwhelmingly corruption-free.

There can be no argument about that and likewise there can be no argument that a municipality which is corruption-free must have an impact on service delivery.

The May 2011 elections are expected to make history. Unless one is mistaken (and the mistakes can occur by not being where the action takes place) the results of the elections are going to be the harbingers of a very changed South Africa.

While these thoughts were busy occupying my mind, I came across two statements on the elections. The first was a report in "The Herald" (15/5/2011) of a statement from the New Unity Movement. The other is to found in the April 2011 issue of "Apdusan", the organ of APDUSA.

Both these statements need examination and analysis.

THE POSITION of APDUSA VIEWS

Before dealing with these statements, we considered it proper to set out our own position on the matter of participation in local, provincial and national government.

1. Briefly put, it is our considered view that there is nothing to bar a radical political organisation from participating in the elections involving all three tiers of government.

We consider parliamentary politics an important terrain of struggle which must be seized with both hands.

2. There are many advantages to participation in such politics just as there are many grave dangers. A careful study must be made of radical organisations participating in parliamentary politics in Europe in the 19th century, 20th and 21st centuries. Likewise a study has to be made of such participation in Asia in the 20th and 21st centuries to learn lessons in order to avoid or minimize the dangers.

The real danger lies in the prolonged duration of participation.

3. The various tiers of government have real powers to affect and change the lives of the people and to attend to their reasonable democratic demands.

Effective tactics and a long term strategy have to be carefully crafted.

4. Our organisation (Apdusa Natal) since the revival of the Unity Movement in the 1980s was a dynamic and vibrant one for a number of years. For reasons not germane to the debate, our numbers became depleted over the years through death and desertion. Today our existence as a group centres round the maintenance of our website and the production of Apdusa Views. We are not part of Apdusa.

THE POSITION OF THE NEW UNITY MOVEMENT

1. The statement attributed to the New Unity Movement is, and I say this respectfully, most unfortunate and regrettable.
2. One has to merely compare this statement with those of the Unity Movement and its affiliates, like “The Background of Segregation”, the “Declaration to the People of South Africa’ (1951), the “Declaration to the People of the World” “The Declaration to the People of South Africa (1984) and numerous others to see how insipid, lifeless and uninspiring this statement is.
3. Let us hope that future statements do justice to the history and traditions of the Unity Movement both insofar as content is concerned and the tenour of the documents.
4. There appears to be a misconception about the conclusions to be drawn when voting in previous post-1994 elections did not achieve people’s demands. The

blame is placed on the “Vote” for failure of service delivery. The statement goes so far as to say:

“No matter which political party wins, the result for most of the people will remain the same.”

This is a sweeping and unsubstantiated statement in the light of clear evidence that most DA controlled municipalities are excelling in combating corruption and have practiced clean governance. It is not valid to lump such municipalities with those of the ANC controlled municipalities which have become bankrupt through plunder and looting and have been placed under administration.¹

a) We must distinguish between the present franchise (local, provincial and national) with that of the Native Representative Council and its sibling crop of dummy institutions designed for quislings.

b) The municipality which is set up has real powers. It has powers to pass laws to regulate the conduct of its citizens; the imposition and collection of rates, taxes and levies; the development within the boundaries of the Municipality; the power to effect service delivery within the limits placed by the availability of finances.

c) Is NUM then saying that if it wins a majority within a municipal area, the assured result would be non – delivery? With service to the people foremost in their minds and with the honesty and integrity for which the Unity Movement is renowned, what is to stop the NUM

¹ A polite word for bankruptcy

from fulfilling its mandate to the people of the Municipality?

d. If this can be done in one municipality why can it not be done in other municipalities where the NUM wins?

e. The list of criticisms of the present socio-economic system cannot be blamed on the “Vote” when the real culprits are the members and leaders of the ANC. It is like blaming the instrument or tool instead of the person who misuses and abuses it. We go so far as to say that no vote anywhere in the world is safe from abuse and misuse by those in power and who are so inclined.

f. The reference to “local democracies” is puzzling. Why is there a need to coin a new phrase when for long decades, we were content with “*organisations of the people*” whether political, civics, professional, trade unions, clubs and the like. Democratic Centralism has always been our guiding principle in matters of debates and decisions governing relationships between members and the organisation.

g. Even if NUM were not to win power in a single municipality, the role of an opposition can be invaluable in holding the ruling party to account and to perform a watchdog role. A dynamic opposition party can galvanise the population on the day to day issues which affect them. It is one way of becoming known to the population as people who care for the poor and wretched of this country. When, then, the next elections take place the population will know who are the people or the party which represents the interests of the toiling masses.

The matter of the Constituent Assembly

Interestingly, both NUM and Apdusa see the salvation of the oppressed and exploited in the convening of a Constituent Assembly which will then draw a new constitution.

1. There is nothing inherently revolutionary about a Constituent Assembly. It can be revolutionary or counter-revolutionary depending on the alignment of forces. It is not a panacea for all our problems.²
2. The direction that a constituent assembly takes will depend which political tendency in the assembly is the strongest.
3. A setting up of a Constituent Assembly is the culmination of a struggle which can take many decades.
4. If for the sake of argument we say that a Constituent Assembly is to take place next week, what will that do for NUM or Apdusa?
5. They will be completely submerged by parties like the ANC.
6. In that situation the Constituent Assembly will only serve to endorse the programme and policy of the ANC.
7. Long before you can talk about a constituent assembly, you have to devote much time in planning how to get to the stage where you can demand for such an assembly, should we decide to take that route. And then the hard and arduous task of

² Lenin had no compunction about dissolving the Constituent Assembly by force of arms when he found that the Bolsheviks and their allies were placed in a minority. Out of 703 delegates the Bolsheviks numbered only 168.

- building a nation-wide mass organisation which will command a majority in the assembly.
8. The leadership of the Unity Movement at the time of its formation and thereafter during its functioning existence did not bother about a constituent assembly.
 9. The South African Parliament has the power to formulate a new constitution. It is in a manner of speaking, a constituent assembly.

NUM adopts an abstentionist position

1. If corruption is the dominant contradiction today in South Africa, then it is the bounden duty of persons and organisations committed to socio-economic liberation to take a clear public position against corruption. Since corruption in its wide sense is the direct cause of the failure of service delivery, the fight and struggle against corruption has to be given priority.
2. Yet there is not a word about corruption. In fact the word corruption *is not even mentioned* in the entire published statement.
3. The NUM ought to be among the leading crusaders against corruption. It should be doing what the DA has done and is doing. Yet it is nowhere to be found in this crucial battle.
4. The DA has seized the opportunity offered and earned the title of the champion for clean governance and the nemesis of corruption.
5. The predictions are that the DA will make the greatest gains in the May local elections, especially

in the form of support from the African sector. That is something that no non-African political leadership has been able to do since the second half of the 20th century.

Conclusion

One is left with a sad and lingering image of a lonely NUM, sitting on a suitcase of ideological treasures, gazing after the train against corruption as it moved round the corner and soon to be lost to sight.

THE POSITION OF APDUSA³

Unlike NUM Apdusa takes an opposite position. It calls on voters to “*vote for progress.*”

“progress” is defined, inter alia, as:

- “genuine progressive demands aimed at taking the struggle for socialist democracy forward”
- Voting for candidates who can articulate and fight for these demands

For some reason “progress” has not included the sustained demands for service delivery of basics which have spread like wild fire from one end of the country to the other and have continued unabated. Providing for such service delivery is not the exclusive preserve of socialist democracy.

³ The APDUSA VIEWS group does not form part of APDUSA

The Apdusa statement then goes on to render a powerful and valid criticism of those who do advocate what in effect is a boycott of the elections.

However, we cannot overlook the sweeping unscientific and unjustified lumping together of parties like the “DA, ANC and other bourgeois parties” and accusing them of making promises they have no intention of carrying out.

It is common knowledge that the ANC and the DA are travelling in opposite directions when it comes to the fight against corruption and for clean governance. Does the very powerful position and action taken by the DA as evidenced by the high scoring reports from the Auditor General in favour of the DA amount to nothing? Or is it being said that whether you are pro or anti corruption, you are the same? Do the toiling masses of the country according to Apdusa consider the basic contradiction between capital and labour as the dominant one? If that is so then why are the people not confronting the citadels of capitalism instead of their local municipalities and councillors?

As to how the DA performs when it comes to service delivery, we should be fair and wait and observe and then pass judgement!

There are fundamental issues over which we differ with the DA. Those issues are different from the issues dominating these elections and we can debate and attack. Although in fairness it must be said that many of the holy cows we have been taught to worship have turned out to be the lowly swine. China has become a giant of the industrial world because its leadership departed from the

traditional approach and decided inter alia, to “use capitalism’s money to build socialism.” Cuba has now chosen to travel on the same new road i.e. its own brand of NEP!

There is also the matter of the working class in this country.

1. The working class is not homogeneous.
2. There are two broad divisions:
 - a) The highly unionized section of the workers under trade unions like COSATU.
 - b) A large mass of unorganized workers living in the slums and shanty towns and who suffer the greatest privation.

The first section of the workers, i.e the unionized workers must be placed under careful scrutiny.

Increasingly, the gap between them and the unorganised workers grows by the day. Not only the glaring chasm in the standard of living, but also political and economic interests.

The former have become today’s worker aristocracy. They have *nothing in common* with being imbued with the revolutionary and historic mission of being the leaders of a new world to be born, a world which would lay the foundations of the end of exploitation of human beings by other human beings, of a society free from violence except in self defence and to ward off danger.

The COSATU affiliated trade unions exist, function and survive on violence and constant threats of violence. While the new constitution has forbidden capital punishment, the unions have re-introduced it via the back

door. Today the worker who chooses not to go on strike is liable to be executed. In 2006 during the SATAWU strike over 60 workers were murdered for no other reason that they chose not to strike and to go work. I know of not a single charge or conviction. Who is covering up for the murderers?

SAMWU whose origins lay in the proud struggle history of the Cape Town municipal workers has today become renowned for shameful and anti-social activities like damaging motor vehicles and shops, threatening innocent members of the public worst of all, deliberate trashing the streets with dirt and filth which they are employed to remove and dispose of.

The ruling ANC has clearly given these workers immunity from prosecution.

Hence today when the central issue in the local government elections is the fight against corruption and for clean governance, COSATU has chosen to support the organisation most responsible for corruption and failure of service delivery – the ANC.

The ANC has shown little heart in contesting the elections. COSATU is doing it for them. COSATU is seeking to mobilize its members and their supporters in seeking to ensure victory for probably the most venal and corrupt political organisation or ruling party *in the world*.

So when we talk of the working class let us be clear as to which section of the working class we repose our revolutionary faith in.

And let us be clear as to who we ought to be turning our guns against in the battle around the elections.

It is the view of Apdusa that a “vote for progress means identifying those parties and their political programmes which are opposed to that of the working class majority”⁴

The issues dominating the elections are not a reflection of class war between proletariat and capitalist. It is between the population at large consisting of workers peasants, intellectuals, petty bourgeoisie, middle class and capitalists against the new elite generated by the ANC which is plundering the municipalities it controls to bankruptcy through corruption, and through lack of skills, rendering them non functional.

And let us make no mistake about it. The financial disaster wreaked on municipalities has nothing to do with neo-liberalism. The shoddy houses built is not the work of neo-liberalism but cronyism and political patronage which awards contracts to politically connected persons who do not have a clue how houses ought to be constructed. It is not neo-liberalism which allows potholes to develop. It is your ANC politically connected municipal functionary who fears no repercussions for taking home his/her monthly salary and NOT doing the work of maintaining the roads.

If APDUSA knows of people’s organisations with acceptable demands and with people who can articulate those demands, then surely it is logical for APDUSA to disclose the names of the organisations and individuals and all their contact details so that those persuaded by

⁴ At the bottom of page 1 and going into page 2

Apdusa's case for participating in the elections can "vote for progress".

The failure to make this disclosure is a puzzling and a serious omission.

Even more serious and puzzling is Apdusa's failure to register as a party and contest the elections after making such a strong case to "vote for progress".

Instead of confining one's activities to the rendering of good advice, it would be immeasurable better to *lead by example*.

We are certain that Apdusa must have cogent reasons for making a strong call for the use of the vote for progress and itself refrains from giving the lead to the voters by asking them to vote for it.

A FINAL WORD TO BOTH NUM AND APDUSA

While we are busy talking about building local democracies and asking people to use the vote for progress in the fight against neo-liberalism, there is creeping upon us the spectre of fascism. It comes from various quarters - the unavenged violence by the unionized workers; the widespread culture of immunity by perpetrators of violence on a peaceful people; the unrestrained acts of brutality by members of the Police force against an unarmed people and the increase in such acts culminating in the assassination of freedom fighting leader Andries Tatane; the deliberate starvation of resources, personnel and mandate to the supposed watchdog body, the Independent Complaints Directorate

so as to render it toothless and last but not least the whipping up of mobs to intimidate the judiciary whenever a high-positioned member of the ANC is hauled before the courts. We saw during the Malema trial before the Equality Court, his body guards, armed with automatic rifles, invade the precincts of the Court.

Our respectful advice is to cast our minds to Germany of the 1930s. What was the monumental blunder which handed power to the Nazis on a platter?

Are there any lessons to be learnt?

26th April 2011

.....
APDUSA VIEWS
P.O. Box 8888
Cumberwood
3235

E.mail: Malentro@telkomsa.net
Website: www.apdusaviews.co.za

