

**NOTE VERBALE TO PROFESSIONALS**

**09 November, 2022**

**THE GROWING SILENCE OF THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS AND PROFESSIONALS WHILE THE COUNTRY DROWNS IN DEBT AND GROSS POOR MANAGEMENT**

**A clarion call to South African Professionals**

Most of us would have noticed a few weeks ago, if we were not caught up in the rabid tendency to morph into our sycophant identities, is that the uncomfortable truths which are now being reduced to an attack on a sitting President by former Presidents, are in fact confirmation that the ANC and its structures are in the main impotent and grossly becoming irrelevant. To point out the obvious, none of the three former state Presidents, over whom we are all now squabbling, chose to speak their truths to power at any of the many ANC branches that were hosting their Branch General Meetings over that weekend, but they went to every other platform to air their displeasure about the ANC and the type of leadership it provides to our country. Yet we are made to believe by the same ANC, that its power lies in the branches, “Amandla Asemasebeni” as the saying goes.

For one, President Mbeki thought it was more appropriate to share his truth at some Strategic Dialogue Forum, organized by goodness knows whom, while Presidents Zuma and Motlanthe opted for self-curated gatherings under the auspices of their respective foundations.

All this occured during the peak season of ANC Branch General Meetings across the country, which were extended, in order to accommodate branches that have not convened duly quorate meetings to nominate names for the national executive committee due to be elected at the upcoming ANC conference in December.

The issue of ANC branches constantly struggling to quorate is in itself diagnostic of a party that is in unabated decline. Our ability to acknowledge that, from the view of both rank and file, seems to demonstrate that the hope of renewal of the ruling party remains elusive and improbable. It is a hollow renewal with no class content. The governing party seems to be approaching Organizational Renewal as some popular parlance that is merely esoteric to those who are trying to elevate and absolve themselves, above and from, respectively, the cesspool in which the governing party finds itself as a party and the nation.

None of the Presidents, whether consciously or otherwise, thought that an official ANC platform like a BGM, would be effective enough to drive the points they all wanted to make. Lest we be misunderstood, by no means are we suggesting that members of the ANC should not employ diverse platforms to engage in national discourse. Such a suggestion would only be exacerbating on an already stifled and consistently narrowing space for intellectual activity in our society, but more especially in the ANC. However, we remain consumed as a nation by an ANC that is drowning in an exaggerated estimation of its own self-importance, whilst leaving the rest of the nation behind. Where is the mass base character we always get told about?

It is, however, a fact that we need to point out that branches of the ANC are no longer the nucleus of organisational existence, and have ceased to be the heartbeat of intellectual discussion. Branches are now mere breeding grounds for voting cows. If anything, the supposed attack on the sitting President by the former Presidents, was in fact a bold pronouncement by all three that the ANC is dying, that branches are irrelevant, and that the ANC needs honest and bold interventions to resuscitate it. Central to the decline of the ANC is the blatantly obvious absence of an informed vision along which we would seek to build a shared future that will uplift all our people and the economy. The ANC Resolutions taken at Conference have become moot points that may or may not be implemented. The National Development Plan has essentially evolved into some fictional literature that Trevor Manuel hired his friends to co-author. Year in year out, the State of the Nation Address does not provide a blue-print of a concise, integrated and clear direction that we need to take as nation, but is a collection of random initiatives and projects, that are sometimes conflicting.

Since time immemorial, the strongest currency of the ANC and the MDM movement as a whole, has been the ability to envision a better life for all, and then put in place a tangible programme towards its attainment.

There an evidently clear diagnosis of a party that is in unabated decline, due to poor leadership, and taking along with it our future and that of our children. The South African middle class, as an extensively influential bloc which occupies strategic positions across diverse sectors, has the responsibility to redirect the nation and set us on a new course and trajectory that has the interests of all South Africans at heart.

Professionals must refuse that a party in decline takes with itself, our country, economy, our state into the ashes. We must begin to rebuild after the ashes like our neighbours in the north of our border. Clearly there is a lack of leadership and vision, hence there is no clarity on exactly what needs to be renewed. It is a ruling party consumed by leadership deficiencies, where every member has a claim in leadership positions. It is an environment where meritocracy does not exist. It’s all about the money you have and number of hands that could raise in your name, and lo and behold, you qualify to lead the party and our nation. When all of this happens, there is neglect, of very esteemed South Africans, with merits and credentials to build and lead strategic sectors of our economy.

Whether we are willing to admit it or not, the weakest link in all that is deteriorating in our country and in the ANC, is the audible silence and palpable apathy of the professional and the middle class. Basking in the comfort of our new salaries and invoices paid, we as professionals have not boldly contributed our experience and knowledge towards building a stronger government, economy and a better society for our people. We have erratic and sporadic moments of consciousness and active citizenry, but quickly revert to the pressures of our private lives and corporate struggles, neglecting scores of South Africans who can benefit from us occupying deliberate stronger influence of the direction our country takes. A situation where quantity rules over quality.

A quote comes to mind, accredited to Edmund Burke: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”. As a critical stratum of middle-class professionals in South Africa we have the responsibility to not be onlookers when things fall apart in our own country. The state of our nation calls for professionals to stand up and be counted, and save South Africa from becoming a failed state.

Professionals have disengaged from the project of nation-building, and are bystanders in their own revolution. The affairs of professionals and the people as a whole have been entrusted in the hands of our own political elite, who have dismally failed in the management of our economy, country and government.

In Chinua Achebe’s words, "things fall apart"! The state of our ongoing crises with electricity may not be emphasised enough to show how deep our problems are as a nation. We are now facing a new challenge of water shortages! What is a nation or and economy without water and electricity? Can we grow an economy without these two fundamental economic drivers?

Our failure to transform the economy has now led to a disinvestment by a major company in KZN because of what is called the Construction Cartel, using guns and violence to demand money from companies bringing development, job creation and economic growth. This signals to investors the lack of state authority. The question is for how long must the righteous hurt? The rate of unemployment is at its highest, young people lack hope for the future. South Africa’s children are involved in drugs, alcohol and prostitution. Graduates are languishing at home without employment. In the meantime, government has in the employ of the state more than 2000 Senior Managers without relevant qualifications. Prof Somadoda Fikeni is currently investigating the matter as the Chairperson of the Public Service Commission. State institutions are in collapse because of unqualified individuals at the helm. The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) has been without a full-time Chief Executive Officer and a board. How reckless can such corporate "governance" be tolerated over so many years? It indeed it is sheer incompetence, or a deliberate act to weaken state institutions, promoted by lack of accountability. Where are good professional men and women to stand up, when the state of our public service is deteriorating?

Crime and corruption is rife, as we see in the Zondo report and the Tembisa hospital corruption matter. The poor management of South Africa’s healthcare centres and hospitals which have turned into centres of death and mutilation of our people. Dangerous crime is on the rise, as the cost of living remains very high. The taxes that professionals pay are the highest in our time. The state strangles every last cent out of professionals or the middle-class. Professionals have no one to defend them as they continue to be the cow that gets beaten for its milk. Matters have long reached the limit in South Africa for good men and women not to stand up! Our women and girls continue to be victims of molestation and sexual abuse. It is a fearful act to raise a girl child in South Africa. Primary and secondary school education continues to be on the decline, as government fails to mitigate the problems in that space.

The above state of affairs in our country calls for professionals to unite and to now stand up and be active citizenry. Professionals have the voting power, and the ability to elect a government of their choice. A government that will run professional institutions, and tap into the body of the professional stratum in the construction and development of South Africa. Professionals cannot hope to build a prosperous nation and be developmental, by being active on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. It is only a revolution led by professional activists that will change the direction of our economy and our country. Professionals must start now, and embrace the spirit of awakening, as the problems that South Africa faces have no end in sight. Those at the helm seem to have no clue or direction where the country must go.

Professionals must never allow what we read in the book “Things Fall Apart” and “show tragic flaw of fear, of weakness and failure that will lead to suicide”, just like the story of Okonkwo. The rate in which the state of our nation is going, it is again about “collapse, breaking into pieces, chaos and confusion” The next phase will be that of picking up South Africa of Nelson Mandela from the ashes. The question to the professional middle-class stratum of South Africa, is how long must the wicked flourish?

**Now we stand up!**

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