

Vote for Swapo, but ...

I WISH to react to the speech delivered by the Swapo head and chief coordinator, Moses Garoeb, at a Swapo Youth League seminar in Katutura on December 1.

The theme of the seminar was 'Multi-party democracy in Namibia and the role of the youth'. Mr Garoeb made a strong speech to the more than 500 young people who gathered in the community centre hall.

The speech, among others, concentrated on the future prospects of democracy in the country. He in particular spoke out about the fairness of the last elections in the country, which he said was full of deceit and rigging which resulted in Swapo losing the two-thirds majority.

The Swapo leader pointed out that the failure to obtain the two third majority was due to the fact that many foreigners were brought in from South Africa and Angola to vote for the DTA and other political parties. This practice, he said, would not be repeated in the next national election scheduled for 1995.

In this context, Garoeb called on all Swapo members to work hard politically in order to out-wit other parties, in particular, the DTA, at the polls, and gain a two thirds majority.

Well and good, this is the verdict that all Swapo members will work hard from now on to ensure an election victory for Swapo in the next general elections.

But there are several factors which may still prevent Swapo from obtaining the deserved two thirds majority, if the leadership of the party don't start looking seriously into the problems facing the nation and in particular, workers, supporters and sympathisers of Swapo.

The reality is that on the ground today many people, members and supporters who voted the party into power, are becoming disillusioned with the manner in which different Swapo leaders are looking at the problems facing the nation.

While no doubt is expressed about the capabilities of the Swapo leaders and functionaries to change the status quo, one cannot ignore the fact that most of our leaders are still enjoying their independence honeymoon and time is passing us by.

In the first place, in democratic dispensations and especially in multi-party democracies, politicians often make serious mistakes by under or overestimating the intelligence of the electorate.

This practice as shown in many parts of the world leads to serious disappointments if not properly and carefully addressed.

We can take the example of the



Sandanistas in Nicaragua, Margaret Thatcher etc, and see how people can express themselves politically if their demands are not met.

Therefore, our leaders should stop condoning, through reconciliation, those on the other side of the camp who have never and never will be in favour of Swapo, let alone vote for them in the elections.

Five years from now is a short period of time and if the leadership don't start meeting the expectations and demands of their electorate now, they may be in trouble. Democracy has its good and bad sides, and the bad side is that the situation can change.

Secondly, when it comes to policy making and implementation, we see no contradiction between the ruling party and the Government. The President, Prime Minister and most Cabinet ministers are members of the Politburo and Central Committee of Swapo.

This gives them a fair opportunity to know the problems facing the nation and in particular, those who voted the party into government. Some of the problems facing the people are unemployment, discrimination, taxation, education and housing, to mention a few.

Unemployed is an inherited and chronic problem in this country, which if properly addressed, can be solved or improved. Apart from job gener-

ating projects outlined by the government, it is now time that the government look into the issue of foreign aliens seriously.

Today, most of the jobs that can provide employment to hundreds of Namibians are occupied by South Africans, British, Germans and others. Most of these foreigners have been and still are hostile to Namibians, and especially Swapo.

Another disturbing problem facing our nation is the heavy taxation in this country. In the colonial era, tax in different forms such as personal income tax, overtime super tax, general sales tax and import tax were introduced to boost the war machinery of the South African colonial administration.

This ruthless exploitation of our people by the colonial regime was at the time understandable. But now that Namibia is free and the war is ended, we see no reason why his heavy tax should continue unabated. We do understand the concern of the government to generate funds through revenue, but this should not be done through open and blatant exploitation.

This is my view will only enhance the system of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. What the Government should do is at least maintain personal income tax and tax on imported luxury goods and abolish overtime super tax and gen-

eral sales tax on local and essential commodities and products. Today many people refuse to work overtime because there is no incentive or income since you have to be taxed 42 per cent.

A Swapo government which was voted into power by the poorest and most exploited section of our population should really address this issue seriously because people are suffering and the cost of living rising daily.

In conclusion, I want to emphasise the point that those in power should under no circumstances forget those who put them in power. They should by all means avoid the practice of ignoring the demands and interests of the people or try to humiliate them.

While we all agree with the fact that the Government has only been in office for a short time of eight months, the year 1991 must be a year of practical restructuring and socio-economic improvements.

The immigration issue is also serious, and the Home Affairs Ministry must set up a committee to look into applications for citizenship and resident work permits for foreigners.

Swapo leadership should work hard to convince its followers that Namibia is for Namibians and not for foreigners.

In order to ensure a two thirds majority vote in 1995, the plight of the unemployed must be addressed, workers rights must be improved to avoid further strikes, educational opportunities opened to all Namibian students and youth without tribal or ethnic considerations. Namibia was recently given least developed country status and as such the heavy capitalist taxation must be abolished.

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