

Countdown To 1999 Elections

I MUST commend the Directorate of Elections for the current election slots on television. It is indeed a very important drive to get the voters back to the polling stations and to root out voter apathy. Namibians of voting age need to realise that by voting they are exercising their democratic right and thereby influencing their future.

In anticipation of the forthcoming general and presidential elections later this year, I would like the opportunity to look at the capacities of the different political parties and their chances of winning the elections.

The ruling party Swapo will naturally be the party to beat at the polls. Opposition parties would like to snatch the two-thirds majority away and might even aspire to win the elections. This might prove to be a difficult feat as the ruling party is currently enjoying good support among the masses. The masses have a lot of reasons to vote for Swapo in the next elections. The party is still being seen as the liberator and the movement that brought peace and stability to a people who have been denied that for years. Immediately after independence the party set about to address issues such as poverty, crime and inequality. These evils were inherited from the apartheid colonial regime. The party worked hard on issues such as social and economic development, the provision of jobs and the alleviation of poverty. I always feel that five years is not enough time for a liberation movement to correct the injustices that were inflicted upon the people for decades by a former regime. However, the ruling party excelled in many respects and this was demonstrated when the masses gave it a two-thirds majority vote in the last election.

A weak point of the ruling party however, was its failure, until recently, to successfully transform from a liberation movement to a democratic political party. This transformation was painful and was evident in the recent frustrations that led to Ben Ulenga leaving

Swapo and forming his own party. There is a feeling also that issues such as the apparent conflict of interests by high ranking political office bearers should have been handled in a much more firm manner.

Needles to say however, it is anticipated that Swapo will have a good performance at the polls and win the elections. It is also expected that the recent Caprivi issue will whip up patriotic and nationalistic sentiments and the people will therefore vote for the party that was responsible for a one Namibia, one Nation.

The main opposition party, the DTA, has seen its influence diminish in the last couple of years. The fact that it lost a substantial number of seats in the last elections could be attributed to the following reasons:

- * The effectiveness with which Swapo has run the country - the DTA was not given any legitimate reason to complain and to score political points.
- * The lack of vision of the DTA leadership - so far the DTA has been reactionary instead of proactive and their contributions to national issues in both houses of parliament have been pathetic.
- * Failure of the DTA to replace its current leadership with credible people. This is one of the most important reasons why the DTA will never run this country. The current DTA leadership is still aligned with the former apartheid South African regime and as far as Namibians are concerned, they are not to be trusted. Consequently the DTA will slip even further and lose more seats in the coming elections.
- * Another damaging factor is that people still remember Mishake Muyongo as the former leader of the opposition. Mishake Muyongo has been responsible for the recent loss of valuable Namibian lives in the Caprivi region. He has been quiet about the secessionist ideas until he lost the presidential elections and fell out of favour with the DTA. When

Namibians go to the polls later this year, they will ponder the credibility of the current DTA leadership.

Simply put, the current DTA leadership lacks the qualities needed to win the elections and run this country. Therefore as far as the DTA is concerned, a slow and painful political death is eminent.

The UDF is another opposition party that faces political demise. If there was one political party whose political survival depended solely on ethnic allegiance rather than strong national issues, it was the UDF. Add to that the fact that in Africa subjects normally go where their traditional leaders go, and it can safely be said that the UDF's only support will come from the Damara speaking community of the Khorixas and Okombahes.

Further proof of the UDF's ethnic support base is the fact that the party scarcely holds public meetings in the rest of the country. It does not even have regional structures. Until recently the party was visible through Liebenberg, Biwa and Chief Garoeb, but the suspension of Liebenberg through controversial circumstances did not do the party's image any good. Further, the party lacks a clear agenda and it would therefore be unfair towards parties with national agendas such as Swapo if the UDF win even a single seat in the next elections.

Kosie Pretorius has done nothing to change MAG into a national political party. It must be said that this was on purpose since MAG was created to look after the interests of the whites. However, MAG's future is doomed in the sense that many whites have repatriated to South Africa and the majority of those left in this country could not care less with the shaping of the political landscape of Namibia. Whites have shown little interest in the political affairs of this country. This is evidenced in areas such as national reconciliation and

their absence in the political and social development of Namibia. Many have abandoned the civil service and have gone on to farming and/or to form security companies.

To many whites therefore, as long as there is peace and enough rain for their many farms, they have nothing else to be thankful for. In the light of the above, it would therefore be grossly unfair if MAG wins a seat in the next elections. A parting shot to Kosie: the National Party in South Africa has now reached out to the blacks of that country after they have realized that they are in the minority and they can't stand alone.

I always liked a man who said things as he saw it. Moses Katjiuongwa is such a man. The problem with Namibian politics however, is that most political parties only become serious with public meetings and campaigns during election time. Consequently, most of the time Namibians do not feel the presence of especially smaller parties. And so it happens then that every time Moses Katjiuongwa is shown on television during a parliamentary debate, you don't realise that he speaks for the DCN. The Democratic Coalition of Namibia is simply not visible. Small wonder then that the support base of the DCN has

remained stagnant. The DCN really has to campaign very hard in order to be as a political party in the years to come. As far as the forthcoming elections are concerned, I can't see the DCN going beyond one seat.

What can the CoD do for Namibia that Swapo has not already done or is in the process of doing? Judging from their political agenda, the answer is not very clear. Still, the CoD is one of Namibia's latest political parties and like a kid with a new toy, some people were excited at the birth of this party. This was evident at the launch of the party and the packed house meetings that followed. However, the excitement has worn off and some leaders of the CoD are realising that when you are frustrated with your leaders you don't go off and form a political party. Politics is not child's play. The most recent example of this is the confusion over the total membership of the party. With some professedly sympathetic but blatantly biased reporting from Amupadhi, the nation was led to believe that the membership of the CoD was in the thousands. However, when it had to register for the coming elections it struggled to get the required number of signatures from its members. So, let it be clear that there is a difference between a sup-

porter and a member of a political party. Supporters normally subscribe to the tenets of a party but remain outside the party organisation and the community thus formed. Strictly speaking therefore, a supporter is not a member of a party. A further characteristic of the CoD is that it has an immense amount of frustration and personal dislike for Swapo. Because of this, the CoD might not win credibility with the masses because its leadership is seen to have personal qualms with the ruling party. To impress the masses, the CoD and its leadership should be seen to have the interest of the masses at heart and be willing to bring about changes (if change is necessary). It's political programme, or lack thereof, should be proactive instead of reactionary. This allows for the ascertain that most of its members were not recruited based on a sound political programme, but rather because of the frustrations that many members shared with the leadership.

To say that the CoD is a threat to Swapo is putting things in the extreme. Sure, it will make an impact on the forth-coming elections and might even win a few seats but it will be no threat to Swapo. Political pundits have so far overlooked the possibility that the CoD

might be a threat to the opposition parties. There is a general feeling that many of the opposition parties have not adequately represented the interests of their supporters. Therefore these people might see a saviour in the CoD and vote for it in the elections. In fact that is where most of the votes for the CoD will come from. And that will spell political demise for the smaller opposition parties. The likelihood that CoD will become the main opposition party in the coming years is therefore not ruled out.

As there are only a couple of months left for the elections, serious political parties are urged to start campaigning and bring national issues and agendas for Namibians to appraise and make their choice on election day. I would like to urge my fellow compatriots to go to the polls in numbers and vote for the party with the best political agenda. This is your political future that you are deciding upon. Look at the political agendas of the parties. Don't vote for a political party just because you are equally frustrated or the chief of your ethnic group is a leader of a party. I would equally like to urge farmers to allow their work force to be voter educated so that they can make an educated choice come election time.

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Note: This letter has been shortened. - Ed



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

NOTICE TO ALL TRADERS AND MANUFACTURERS IN NAMIBIA

The Ministry of Trade and Industry is in the process of compiling a comprehensive database on traders and manufacturers in Namibia. This information will be used to provide the necessary services needed by these companies and also to match investors interested in Namibia with local companies. The information will, further, be used to facilitate participation by Namibian companies in trade exhibitions.