

Ya Franceism's Time Is Coming

THE recent remarks by the NUNW principal and a member of the second house of parliament are to say the least not far-fetched, and out of tune as many intellectuals are trying to make us believe.

Often the critics seek shelter from the constitution which they say enjoys international acclaim, which is a model for the rest of Africa, if not the world, and that we are enjoying peace and stability because of this constitution. What one needs to single out is article three.

All one needs to say is that 'Ya Franceism' is probably little ahead of time but a big clock is simply ticking away, and sooner or later the hour will strike. The question then is whether the leaders of today have taken serious steps to prepare the nation for that eventuality or not. All the indications are that so far the latter is the case.

To be more precise, this kind of thinking is not restricted to the land question only, but also to the employment front. As Ya France has said enough on the former, I would devote the energy to the latter. The well-intentioned affirmative action law has simply missed the mark and has basically disappointed the black job seeker decimally.

In the first instance, as far as the setting of targets for equal opportunity employment is concerned, the ball has been basically put in the court of the employers to volunteer their targets and to report to the state on progress. The targets are therefore not mandatory and leave the opportunity for the employers to be creative with facts.

In addition, the drafters

of the law also erred in their definition of who is regarded as previously disadvantaged (by the way, a more appropriate phrase would be 'continue-to-be-disadvantaged').

In their wisdom the definition has been applied in a blanket fashion. Bro Shinguandja explained once on a radio program that by international standards, there are only two recognisable groups, i.e. the Whites and the Blacks and that therefore there is no classification for the Coloureds and Basters.

I personally think this is a benign misrepresentation of facts as the apartheid laws gave preferential employment and treatment to the so-called Coloureds and Basters. Firstly, do these people see themselves as black? I doubt. Secondly, while the Namibians (including the Bro) were fleeing this country in tens of thousands, the Coloureds were flooding into the country from South Africa as Namibia was seen as a lucrative employment ground.

It is solely for this reason that the banks, companies, parastatals and a whole lot of employers are dominated by these people and that even Blacks with university degrees are unable to get employment as they are told they lack experience.

When the non-white people were moved from the old location in early 1960s, Coloureds were taken to Khomasdal while our parents had to go to Katutura; Coloureds enjoyed better social pensions; they had better houses than Katutura; the apartheid government appropriated bigger budgets to Coloured and Rehoboth administrations and the list goes on. It is for this

reason that the affirmative action policy falls short of redressing these injustices simply because its international standards are ill-conceived, lopsided and fatal.

Critics would shun this argument saying why go back into the past while the principal intent of the law is concerned with the future. What exactly would the purpose of an affirmative action be if it is not aimed at changing the wrongs of the past.

How can anybody explain the situation whereby 90 per cent of Khomasdal is employed, and 90 per cent of Rehoboth works in Windhoek while more than half of Katutura is unemployed, and Okahandja which is 20km nearer does not even see 20 residents commuting to work. Is that by accident Bro Shinguandja? I know your views are not expressed out of your personal choice, but imposed by the notorious Chapter Three, right?

As long as these shortcomings persist, the prospects for meaningful affirmative employment in the private sector are basically slim. These shortcomings will be exacerbated by the state's lack of ability (skills and human resources) to inspect, monitor, evaluate and enforce the provisions of the law.

For those people who argue that Ya France seeks a ticket to the Labour Minister post, please bear in mind that he would have probably made a more robust affirmative action law addressing the plight of the black majority. People are apparently scared of what impact the radical laws, or the change (not amendment as chapter 3 is ostensibly not amendable to meet the wishes of the majority) would have on

the international image of the country, or on foreign investment. A simple answer is poor black Namibians blocked from earning a decent living through ownership of productive land and decent employment in the private sector are simply not putting peace and tranquility on their dinner table, living on peace and stability, and surviving on the international acclaim the constitution enjoys.

What matters to them is whether the Shilongos, Tjiranges, Gaobebs etc are going to stand an equal

chance for employment in the private sector with the Van Wyks, Diergaards, Van Der Merwes and Du Toits. When they retire as farm labourers after having enriched white farmers are they going to squat in the corridors? These issues need radical solutions.

A group quick to run to the constitution is the strategically positioned English speaking white liberals formerly sympathetic to the struggle, now showing their true colours. Some call themselves public interest law practitioners are quick in taking the

government to court if for example a work permit of a white South African (in a position to hire a private lawyer) is declined on the basis that Namibians could also do the job, using money raised in the name of the poor Namibians. Yet they fail to even making a public statement when illegal roadblocks are mounted and black people are harassed and terrorised, or black farm workers are kicked on to the streets (lock, stock and barrel) after 27 years of service.

I must conclude by saying that young disillusioned black Namibians support Ya France's cause. If there is any move on his side for Labour position, he has our support. He is the one having the guts to speak up without fear of favour. The situation has reached a level that some of us will consider joining vigilante if they are launched to seek restoration of black dignity.

SG GAMAL KATUTURA

Note: This letter has been slightly shortened.

Sarah's Secret

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