

29



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Question by Honourable Nico Smit, PDM

In last Friday's (19 February 2021) Republikein an article by "Plane spotter" reveals that Air Namibia made profit in 1990, 1992 and 1996 according to the auditors KPMG. Only after the ruling party SWAPO decided to implement its policy of appointing politically acceptable people in top management and on the Board of Directors, rather than people with airline and business competencies, did the catastrophic decline in profitability start

I now ask: Will the Hon Deputy Prime Minister admit that she misled parliament as well as the public with her statements that Air Namibia has never made a profit since its inception and that it had historical losses attributable to the apartheid era?

Honourable Speaker,

I want to thank Honourable Nico Smith of PDM for the question, that will give me an opportunity to put in context my remarks on the historical loses of Air Namibia.

The history of Air Namibia can be traced back to 1946 and since inception it has not shown profits as it has always been subsidised by shareholders and other operations, be it, the South African Airways that was using it as a feeder service or the mining companies that have been using the airline to ensure the effective transport and exploitation of the natural resources from Namibia, and from the government of the Republic of Namibia

When the independence of Namibia was imminent in 1989, the airline operation was incorporated into Transnamib possibly for cross subsidiarity, this union has been in

operation until Air Namibia was absorbed into the government in 1999. Subsequently, the Government of Namibia further had to inject an amount of 3.7 million US dollars., The issue of bailing out Air Namibia has been a continues debate in Parliament, to the extent , that many voices from the other side of the House have been calling for the closure of Air Namibia.

Therefore, while I have no intention to question the professional work of KPMG in the years 1990, 1992 and 1996 referred to as the years that Air Namibia has made a profit, I am not sure if that was a profit of Air Namibia or it was subsidised by Transnamib. One just wonders why this audit did not mentioned the years 1991, 1993, 1994 and 1995? Be it, as it may be, the fact remains Air Namibia has always been subsidised.

Honourable Members,

In addition to the Republikein article of 19th February 2021, referred to by Honourable Nico Smith in his question to me, I draw your attention to an academic research on Air Namibia. The research is available online and I quote: “before the independence of Namibia on 21st March 1990, Namib Air was a department within Transnamib which is a fellow state owned enterprise that was mandated to transport

passengers and cargo by rail and air. Namib Air was making operational losses when it was under the care of Transnamib. The continued losses necessitated the separation of Namib Air from Transnamib.” Those are not my words.

Honourable speaker and honourable members,

It has never and will never be my personal character to mislead the Parliament let alone the public, which I am part of. As in doing so, it is just as good as selective morality with an intention of gaining cheap political points while one is fully aware of the reality on the ground.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

It is unfortunate, disturbing and sickening, that in our country, there are still some who are strong supporters of apartheid to the extent that, once one refers to historical facts, like the historical losses of Air Namibia, they immediately jump to defend apartheid as we have seen in some of the newspaper headlines: “Apartheid government also to blame for Air Namibia’s down fall” – flagged by my picture. Fellow Namibians, apartheid is declared by the international community as a crime against humanity and no matter how much you try to clean apartheid, you will never

succeed. The damage made by apartheid is so deep, to the extent that it will go from one generation to another just like the slave trade of Africa that happened hundreds of years ago, its negative impact is still felt. Thanks to SWAPO that has fought so hard and won over apartheid in Namibia. I am aware, that there are those who are bitter because SWAPO has defeated apartheid and will use every opportunity to attack SWAPO as they want to see SWAPO out of the Namibian politics. Such an attempt is clear in the question under discussion.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members

I want to make it clear, that many of us who joined SWAPO for the love of this country and its people, those of us who have invested much of our lives in defence of our mother land Namibia under the banner and guidance of SWAPO will make sure that, SWAPO will remain to lead in the social and economic development of our country in the face of all detractors both internal and external. We shall overcome.

I thank you.