

HON. B. ULENGETA

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Speaker of the National Assembly, Right Honourable Theo-Ben Gurirab;

Honourable Members of Parliament;

in the same spirit as several of my colleagues have done, I would like to express myself on the Appropriation Bill tabled in this House on 19 February 2014 by the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa - Amadhila.

Traditionally, the budget presentation, as much as it gives us a glimpse of the artistry, creativity or brilliance the particular Minister applies to the figures, graphs and numbers at hand, it is more the result of consultations, compromises and decisions of the cabinet as a whole, and not necessarily the impositions of the Minister of Finance alone.

Whatever either censure, or commendations we express with regard to the financial propositions on the table, therefore, (and there are quite a lot of the former, yet not so much of the latter!), are directed to President Pohamba's Cabinet, and not to the Minister of Finance; at least not to her alone!

Having said that, let me hasten to admit that Minister Kuugongelwa-Amadhila really tries her bit to make good of a bad situation.

She has tried, and in many ways succeeded, to show some aspects of light in a very dark configuration...

(Configuration in the sense of some kind of financial and economic arrangement she presents)

In her budget statement the minister refers several times to progress:

"We have made considerable progress in many spheres, thanks to the pro-active socio-economic development policies that were implemented."

PROGRESS??

Mr. Speaker, let me, before I get into more sorrowful things, commend the government on some real progress that was achieved, and should be encouraged to continue with for the short period of time they still have left:...

The creation of and a fairly efficient National Youth Service: this institution needs to be expanded and actually made mandatory for every Namibian youth, Black or White, Rich or Poor, short or tall!

The expansion of the national economic infrastructure with regard to the ports, the national road and aerial networks is a necessary prerequisite for socio-economic development and we have done fairly well in this regard. In the last few years the opening up of the up-graded Kamanjab - Omakange - Okahao road has expanded this infrastructural network, and so has the Rundu - Nkurenkuru - Elundu - Eenhana, and the Gobabis - Otjinene up-grading projects. It is heartening to see in this same regard that government now takes on the Gobabis - Aranos access way, via Aminuis, as well as that short but very irritating strip between Oshigambo and Eenhana. I therefore await, with good reasons, soon an announcement regarding Grootfontein - Tsumkwe - Gam, and Omakange - Ruacana, and the double carriageway between Windhoek and Walvis Bay via Okahandja and Usakos, for now,

Air Namibia is a money-eater, but a strong moral booster, a powerful national symbol, and an essential feature of our international image as a Nation, Land of the Brave. However, and this is a serious however - government must make sure that these funds are successfully re-couped from tourism, and other aspects of foreign trade.

The minister and deputy minister of Education are trying their best to bring under control a hopeless and

disastrous situation, and I can only wish them strength and courage. However, as a whole, government has clearly de-prioritized education, and this is revealed in the fact that where-as other sectors such as Defense are getting increased allocations in terms of percentage of the whole budget, Education allocations are actually falling gradually, related to other sectors.

The digitalization of broadcasting and the introduction of live parliament coverage by the NBC are also commendable, as in so doing we may promote and democratize parliament to a greater extent than before.

With regard to trade and industry, it's heartening to see that we have a guiding policy, and there is a great emphasis on industrialization, especially with regard to that which we ourselves produce, such as fish processing, diamond cutting, polishing, and the manufacturing of jewelry... the polishing of other gemstones, the smelting, processing and further purification of copper, gold and uranium, and more.

As a matter of fact the mining sector has produced a strong infrastructure, and has build up a core of local, skilled artisans and other skilled or semi-skilled Namibians who are the heart of the mining industry. At Namibia Institute of Mining Technology, NIMT, in Arandis, Tsumeb, and Keetmanshoop, a number of well-trained artisans have been produced and absorbed into the mining industry.

Nothing inspire me more than watching this tiny young lady with the Kwambi number 11 on both cheeks climbing on a ladder and get into the driving seat of this huge truck at Rössing Uranium, start it up, and work this gigantic earth-moving machine. So far,; so good!

But, However, I do not commend government for the creation of a number of overnight millionaires, some of whom are now required to answer in court for acts of fraud and theft that they committed, right under the nose of government!!)

And further, with regard to the strengthening of democratic institutions, comrade speaker, may I say, it is a crying shame that the ruling party continues to take the lion's share (about 80%) of funds given to all political parties represented in parliament. There is simply not a single justification for dealing with state resources in such a biased and one-sided manner! This money belongs to the State, and not to the government; or to a certain political party.

And, what is worse is that the government, which was supposed to be referee in a supposedly fair competition between equally able players, comes and awards one side the trophy, without the game even starting, simply because the referee is also a player. That is wrong and must be corrected.

Comrade Speaker if this matter is not arrested and a more equitable formula introduced, then there is no way that democracy shall flower in our country!

Let me continue to refer to how the minister spoke, on behalf of government:

"Today, I am glad to report that we have made good progress to achieve the outcomes..."

However, the Minister also picked up some courage, and looked the beast right in its nightly face:

"In reality, (she says) we know too well that Namibia is still grappling with glaring social and economic challenges. These include, but are not limited to:

(read from the speech, page 4)

So we have to do things differently... Act swiftly... Transform the economy so that all Namibians can share..."

the Minister comes over. But. (3)

Comrade Speaker, in this paragraph let me assist the Minister in painting further the picture she left unfinished; sure she couldn't finish this picture of so much sadness in just a few hours. Neither shall I be able to; I shall just add a few more of the miserable details she left out...

Emphatically, I do not support the creation of instant millionaires over-night by literally handing into the pockets of the so-called "well-connected", by giving them tenders which they again tender out to other people.

You give me two million to build 5 houses; I rush to M&Z Motors and buy myself a new Benz. I drive around in it till I bump into a Chinese fellow, whom I give the remaining million to build the 5 houses, finish!

As far as Education is concerned, it is a crying shame to note that:

Never since independence have we been able to provide sufficient, reasonable and efficient opportunities to the majority of our youth: every time, year upon year, we failed the majority of the grade 10 and grade 12 and sent them into the streets

While it's true that government finally (from last year) *have started providing* provides more or less free primary education to Namibia's children, at a closer inspection of the scene, things still look very ugly indeed!

- there is no punitive regime to ensure compulsion provided for in our constitution, and so many parents still have their children out of school without any consequences...

many parents are so poor that they cannot afford a school uniform or school shoes

Children many cannot put up a meal every morning for children to eat be4 they travel to school

many defect from school because of the long distances they have to walk on hungry stomachs

many go to school only to find that there is no class room, or no teacher, or there are no text books to study from

many parents, at the secondary level can simply not afford to pay whatever amount is required

government still allow for the continuation of that illegitimate extortion called the school

development.

fund because government does not want to look into alternative ways of funding a free and compulsory education system

(This despite the fact that many of the members sitting on the other side, and this side as well, have themselves been educated in other countries at no expense of their own, but through socio-economic arrangements and policies of other governments... *Government must look into alternative ways of funding Education*

That is the situation right here in Khomas region; and many of the government cadres are so conveniently situated away from these realities so they do not have to be reminded about them every morning...

Further, it is sad and regrettable, to note that EDUCATION is not the priority of priorities, and that government has been pretending otherwise while actually neglecting this most essential of all priorities:

Since independence, education has taken about 22% of the national budget... But while it rose to 23,7% in the previous financial year this time it has again fallen to 22,6%

But However, the needs of education and the crisis therein have been escalating
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So when I compare the allocation to the Education ministry to that of Defence, I am asking, why does government see defence as more important than education?

Defence allocation has grown from 5% in 1990 to about 11% in the current year.

Land and Housing: this is only another aspect of this sorrowful picture the minister chose to leave unpainted.

To start with, the budgetary allocation to this important ministry has remained, for the past quarter of a century, between 0,5% to 1% of the national budget, not more. Even as we speak (and I am aware of the

fact that this financial year the ministry's budget has actually doubled, from 300 mil to 600 mil.) still it is a meager 600 million, especially if one takes into account that a single farm in Namibia can cost up to N\$1 billion!

I have taken note of the much orchestrated mass housing project, and I must say this, namely that to many Namibians living on shacks across the country this is like a drop of cool water on a parched, thirsty tongue. I really wish it would be brought to fruition. I would like to caution the Minister and government, however, especially given the fact that this project came as lightning from the blue, after 25 years of neglect by government, that they should ensure that this is and remain a genuine effort to supply social housing to the poor, and not just another millions transferred to the accounts of the Swapo elite and the politically well-connected...

The reports in the media recently do not seem to bode well for this project, and we really wish it would be carried out without the usual corruption, nepotism and the stealing from public coffers.

Comrade Speaker,

The only achievement is that the majority on the other side have now migrated, from the landless majority to the landed elite minority. Therefore the people of Namibia must not be surprised to find that instead of government representing the landless, they now protect the landed minority. One hears from the ruling party benches that "willing seller -willing buyer" policy is not working. But why is it still policy?

Comrade Speaker, when this ruling party came first to power they promised they would move the infamous Cordon Fence (die Rooi Lyn) to the Angolan and Zambian borders. Up to now, the people wait. But clearly this government has no intention to remove the "red line" and integrate the agricultural community. In the communal areas there is no land management. Soil erosion through rain and wind and overpopulation of both man and beast has done and is doing incalculable harm, but no action is taken.

Comrade Speaker, For more than 10 years we have been promised action against the illegal fences in communal areas. But instead of the promised action, Ministers and government officials themselves appropriate to themselves what belong to the entire community, without action from government. But we are told we live in peace. What kind of peace is this?

Unfortunately there is no parliamentary acceptable language to describe a policy that does not work in practice, nor is there acceptable language to describe such a government.

Yet we are told to register for 20 hectare of land in that uncared for, arid world.

What are the implications of 20 hectares, what happens after that?

When are the land fencers going to be punished?

The grinding poverty affecting Namibians is not limited to the agricultural sector or the rural country side only. As a matter of fact, ~~abject~~ abject poverty exists in towns, and those miserable villages which look like they were abandoned in a hurry in the middle of construction. I talk about places such Dordabis, Otjimbingwe, Kalkrand, Stampriet, Uis, Opuwo or Karaburg. Many inhabitants of these towns are third and fourth generations of our dispossessed forefathers whose land were taken away from them more than one hundred years ago. They never knew a piece of land they could call their own, yet they never enjoyed sustainable employment or training either. When resettlement comes they are left out, and when drought relief food is there, they can't get it, as government argues that they are not farmers!

Some from this section of our population have drifted into the bigger cities, and sit now in the darkness, on the verge of the city, "enjoying" the lights from a respectful distance. These are courageous folks; they are heroes! Enter their shacks on the verge of town and you will see what commendable job they have carried out building those shacks from the flimsiest of materials! Watch them when the rains and stormy weather arrives, and washes the knocking place and the kooi, away. They have to raise families and take their children through school every God's day. The kids go with neither breakfast nor lunch box

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every day, competing with the well-to-do. Many have the physical signs of quashiorkor. These people's lives and their communities must be turned around. It is not achieved through the current economic policies of the current government.

Meanwhile government bulldozes the shacks of the landless people in various towns everywhere. How can you call that peace, and Why should this be tolerated? I call on government to stop bulldozing houses of the houseless and landless, that is really undue provocation. Make land available to the landless in a sustainable and affordable fashion.

Some colleagues have called for a second land conference. But I believe a second land conference shall only be an opportunity for government to soothe the wounds and calm the fears of the landless while they all go back to their farms!

The people, the landless, us who do not represent the landed elite must call for our own land conference and decide what to do with the land that we have fought for for more than 100 years, and for which the blood of all our people have been shed so generously....

That is the kind of land conference I would like to propose...

On labour relations, it is really lamentable to see how Swapo Party has destroyed the labour movement, it doesn't exist any more.

The year b4 last there was a strike by some teachers for what they saw as legitimate reasons for action. Unfortunately the slogan "an injury to one is an injury to all" couldn't be heard anywhere, there was no organization that could offer solidarity. Government threatened imprisonment left and right, and workers demands are suppressed everywhere. Meanwhile everywhere workers are exploited suppressed and humiliated on a daily basis to the extent that they have to carry feces in they hands this is done with such check contempt and impunity, as the backbone of the workers is destroyed.

Comrade Speaker, the opposition to the building of a new Parliament is the reflection of the anger of the people at the lack of land and housing for the masses. While there is nothing wrong with building parliament, it is very wrong for us to build a parliament now, while for 25 years the same government sat quietly, watching the mushrooming of shack cities, so-called informal settlements without building houses for them. In other words, attend first to the masses before u build palaces. That is my stance with the building of a new parliament, as it was with the new state house, which costed more than one billion N\$.

Finally in this election year, it is worrisome that the election bill is not yet with us... We just went through a registration exercise, which I can't really see how its going to work without the new bill being here...is there something in the bag?