

**Intervention by Ben Ulenga, MP
Congress of Democrats (CoD)
During the Budget Debate 2012/2013
National Assembly
15 March 2012**

Madam Deputy Speaker, recently I had the opportunity to look at a few projects of recent years, carried out by the governments in collaboration with its development partners. I was to mention a few of these which I left being very pleased with what I saw, they are namely: the deepening of the harbor at Walvis Bay by Namport, the construction and tarring of Kamanjab-Opuwo highway, the Rundu-Katwitwi-Eenhana highway, and finally the Gobabis-Otjinene connection not to mention the Oshikuku-Kalongo connection.

Madam Deputy Speaker as you may remember I have been one of the most vocal persons in this county when it comes to demanding the implementation and completion of the Rundu-Katwitwi-Eenhana highway project, as I consider it a very vital project for our national economy, linking as it does the north-central regions with the central-southern Africa hinterlands, namely Eastern Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana among others.

The Rundu-Eenhana highway is an ancient route and has great symbolical meaning to many Namibian freedom fighters.

formidable
During an earlier stage of its long existence, it was referred to as "Elondo Iya Kanyandi" literary "the rise of Kanyandi" and was as such recognized and feared as an indomitable almost impenetrable forest which one had to cross before emerging on "the other" side. Crossing this forest was like passing the test of bravery or commitment to the liberation cause which demanded self-sacrifice.

I must say, Deputy Speaker that I was very pleased to find all these infrastructural projects completed and beautifully rounded off, or wound up. They are so important to the transportation movement of persons and goods throughout the country and even beyond. However, as of the local observes remarked commented "these beautiful roads and networks means very little to the local unemployed youth, no matter how much they may mean to the rich".

The Kamanjab-Opuwo and the Rundu-Eenhana projects are a pleasure to drive on.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members of the National Assembly, the tabling of the National Annual Budget in the National Assembly by the Minister of Finance has been, right from the inception of the first National Assembly in 1990, that is 22 years ago, not just one of the most important, but indeed the main event of the yearly session of the National Assembly.

When the first of its kind was performed in April 1990 by the first Minister of Finance in the first administration under the first independence government, the Honourable Dr. Otto Herigel it was quite a colorful and memorable event, with the Minister in Bow-tie and classic suit accompanied by his Wife, Madam Herigel, and carrying a small brown, leather-bound case-the original budget,

→ equally well-dressed

-that day

or container' according to the English language, there was pomp and fan-fare all over the place and it was also lend extra color by the fact that this was a strange and uncommon occurrence in a country whose citizens never before had the power to decide on what or how much to spend on the management of its public affairs.

pointed out during the debate and

Honourable Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, that was perhaps the only really un-pretended and truly honest budget debate, a budget debate carried out in the true hope and expectation that whatever one said with regard to the amounts proposed for appropriation and expenditure – would be considered during the final decisions of the committee stage. At the end of that first debate in his response Dr. Herigel proposed to amend his proposal by under taking in writing, to table later during the same financial year, an additional budget to meet additional needs that may not have been catered for in the initial appropriation bill. It was on the basis of that formal undertaking for an additional budget that the first budget was passed. *by the house.*

Madam Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members and comrades, to tell you the honest truth, all the subsequent appropriation bills passed into acts in this House were merely rubber-stamped by the National Assembly. *just* In other words these were decisions written in stone in Cabinet, and brought to the National Assembly for the show. Even the Minister herself has justified this on numerous occasions by arguing that there is no need to change a document which is in itself the result of such a lengthy process of consultations (outside the House) and *final* consensus, also outside this House!

Current

So, why does the Minister have to table the budget in this House if there has already been "lengthy consultations and consensus" outside the House?

The answer to this great question lies in what has become quite a major "Hallmark" of the ruling party that is the Swapo Party and its government, namely to put up a show to pretend to be doing one thing which in actual fact doing quite another!

Comrade Deputy Speaker, this particular thread has been woven intrinsically into the cloth of the history of our Liberation Movement and now for the moment, the county's ruling party: consider such historic documents as the Swapo Constitution of 1976 and its unconditional commitment to the "ideology of Scientific Socialism" and numerous other documents attending to the same ideology of socialism when the times suited the another's; consider the Namibian Constitution promising without blinking an eye-under article 29(3) " A person should hold office as President not more than two terms". And then the first Amendment Act 1998, an enduring article 134 of the constitution again without blinking of an eye: "not with standing Article 29(3), the first President of Namibian may hold office as President for 3 years".

Consider further, the serious Article 20 that solemnly states.

- i) "All persons shall have the right to Education
- ii) Primary Education shall be compulsory and the state shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining state schools at which primary education will be provided **FREE OF CHARGE**!"
- iii) Children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have attained the age of 16 years, whichever is the sooner..."

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Madam Deputy Speaker, "Right" means the something to which one has a just claim", the power or privilege to which one is justly entitled, something that is both legally and morally exactable in other words something which I have the right or legal power to **demand**, form the state! Something that people can call for forcibly or urgently and obtain" (**Wobster collegial Dictionary) tenth Edition, First Printing 1993.**

Consider Article 95, "Promotion of the welfare of the People", namely ^{inter alia} the state shall actually promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting, ~~inter alia~~, policies aimed at ensurance that senior citizens are entitled to and receive a regular pension adequate for the **maintenance of decent** standard of living and the enjoyment of social and cultural opportunities and" the enactment of legislation to ensure that the unemployed, the incapacitated, the indigent and the disadvantaged are accorded such social benefits and amenities as such are determined by parliament to be just and affordable with due regard to the resources of the state"

Despite all this highfalutin eloquence with which the constitution joins Parliament and MP's to and despite the oath we take at our swearing in ceremony and subsequently every single day of our sitting " I do hereby swear that I shall be faithful to the Republic of Namibia uphold, protect and defend the constitution..."") not defend the government or any political party! There is still no unemployment benefit available for Namibians 22years after the coming into life of the constitution.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, that the Cabinet tends to present an already cooked and chewed budget to parliament for the latter's ease of swallowing is itself a breach of the letter and spirit of the constitution, which states under article 40 (c) thereof, namely that: the cabinet has the duty and function "to formulate explain and assess for the national assembly the budget of the state and its economic development plans and to report to the national assembly thereon..."

This is not what happens currently nor has it ever happened since the days of Dr. Herigel in the distant past! What happens now is that cabinet comes to present the budget to itself and pass it in front of the national assembly backbenches, without even the assistance of the letter.

What Honourable Kandindima Nehova stated yesterday in this regard, this was not the first time such statement was echoed against the wall s of this august and dignified building? It was said before statement was considered to be treacherous to the state and government, and totally unpatriotic.

Mrs Deputy Speaker, I wish to make use of this opportunity to make the following comments on aspects of government policy, which policy is the framework of this very budget we are discussing.

I shall start with government policies relevant to social welfare and security as it affects also aspects of Nation Building social justice and national unity.

The policies of regarding assistance to veterans of the liberation struggle have received a mixed reaction, to say the least while many have welcomed this policy and actually considered it as long overdue many others felt that there is too much attention paid to those who were involved in the liberation struggle on the Swapo part, especially those who were in exile at the expense of other equally needy categories of Namibians.

Madam Deputy Speaker, N\$ 50 000 once and N\$ 2000, on a monthly basis is really not much. How does one expend N\$ 50 000? You cannot buy a house or a car. You cannot pay your child's university fees perhaps part there off. However, why can't this meager means of assistance be extended to other category of Namibians especially those in comparable situations? I have in mind, e.g. the returnees who came from Botswana, who returned home after have been exiled for several, 3 or 4 generations? Land-less Namibians be extended to other category of Namibians, especially those in comparable situations? I have in mind, e.g. the returnees who came from Botswana, who returned home after having been exiled for several, 3 or 4 generations? Landless Namibians who have been evicted from their lands or expropriated to several generations and now have no other home apart from the white man's farm where once upon a time their great-grand parents were employed? There are others fitting the same situation or even worse of the urban and rural poor with water bills mounting into terms of thousands of dollars in dent.

Many ask me what's the difference between the exiles and other poor Namibians and I answer: there is none. Why are they preferred above the rest?

The next aspect of policy I want to assess critically is the government's Luke-warm stance on our people's justified demands for reparations, restoration and restitution form the government and state of Germany, which reparations are the only material way in which the current state of Germany can make amends for atrocities committed during the time of oppression in Namibia especially between 1894 – 1910. Madam Deputy Speaker, Honourable members! We propose there should be a far stronger support for from the government side on this issue. The way we treat the matter now, I'm not surprised at all that the German Government has been treating our demands with utter contempt, so far!

Comrade Deputy Speaker, colonialism as it happened in Namibia about 100 years ago was a vile act of aggression, an unprovoked act of war. In the case of Namibia, it also included genocide and ethnic cleansing. It involved the (permanent?) expropriation of land and cattle and the ultimate destruction of peoples namely the Herero and the Nama.

It's high time therefore that we as a state, a government and a nation (one nation!) rise in the face of Germany's arrogance and cold calculated condescension and patronizing attitude and demand not hand-outs from Germany in the form of aid but the Reparations, Restoration and Restitution due to us as a people and a state as well as to us as communities uniquely affected by genocide as descendents of those murdered and dehumanized and forcibly removed from their motherland.



Madam Deputy Speaker, Germany ranks No. 9 on the Human Development Index –HDI while Namibia ranks 137th! That tells the story of eloquently!

Many have commented in the media about the state of education in the country some feel there's too much thrown into Education without the right fruit being harvest as yet.

My considered view, Madam Deputy Speaker is, that we need to put in a lot still and the sooner, will we be ask to expect any harvest!

This year alone about 7 thousand prospective students were turned away from UNAM and the Polytechnic because there is no place for them at university!

If we are to chase 2030 all that is a human being should be attending classes right away! And yet we require and demand that people must pay thousands in order for them to be able to claim what is right fully their-Education!!

As I stated above we have been able to deny Namibian children their right to a free and compulsory education by amongst others, allowing the illegal School Development Programme (SDP).

As far as TIPEEG is concerned there seems to me much haste and less speed as the expression goes.

Where are the TIPEEG Projects and when is the grass going to start burning?

With those few words, I rest my case.

I thank you!

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