

STATEMENT

By Ben Ulenga, MP.

Intervention: Budget Debate: 31 March 2011

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Comrade Speaker, comrades members of the National Assembly; I am happy to state that I approach this year's budget debate with some degree of optimism, though cautious, some modicum of hope, though, unfortunately I must say it's very clearly not yet the time for enthusiastic celebrations!

That, comrade Speaker, was also the gist of my initial comments when I was asked by the media to comment about this year's budget presentation, and I am glad to have the opportunity to expand on some of the aspects of my comments. My optimism and hope do not derive from a perception of the current appropriation bill as being the panacea of all or any of our problems. It's a drop in the ocean.

My optimism and hope are more fundamental; they derive from the expression: "a luta continua".

Comrade Speaker, my approach is not going to be party-political. I speak for the Congress of Democrats, but I also speak for our people and country, Namibia. I am therefore not necessarily going to be antagonistic: neither towards Swapo Party nor to the other parties in the House; I believe this is no such time.

The struggle continues, This struggle has many local aspects, including local players, local overtones and ramifications, a number of which are catastrophic if not fatal. But this is essentially a global (world-wide) struggle. We are still struggling against a social injustice imposed on us on a global scale; My optimism lies in this, that in such struggle, despite temporal drawbacks, there is always, ultimate triumph.

A vittoria e certa.

Given the reality on the ground, I am going to be critical as always, but not negatively so. This is the time when we must look at the larger picture, examine and define ourselves as a nation amongst nations, look at our situation from the global perspective, at the same time affirming our goals as a people.

Rest assured, comrade Speaker, comrade members of the assembly, if I were the ruling party and I were the one presenting the budget to this House, my figures would definitely have differed from the ones presented by the Minister of Finance, the honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, especially where the specific allocations and vote prioritization is concerned.

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However, given the prevailing economic situation both globally and at home the overall choices are limited in the short term, and the overall pool from where we draw, very precarious.

Namibia's resources are all still in the hands of international capitalists. It has been like that for the last 100 years. Further, Namibia's role in the so-called international division of labour continues to be that of supplier of raw materials for the industries of others. As a country we then import finished products from the industrial economies at exorbitant prices including luxury goods. Ironically, Comrade Speaker it's us or the likes of us in this House who are so addicted to foreign luxury goods, from luxury cars to cell phones to computers to expensive perfumes, spec's, shoes, you name it, we want it; it's us who lead the shopping sprees to New York, London, Paris and Shanghai, and return to display ostentatiously, show off to those who are not as privileged. This deeply deplorable state of affairs will continue to be the reality until such time that we do something about it as a nation. What is more, more and more of our natural resource~ hands of the foreign capitalists day by day. But Article 100 sta~~er~~"

"Land, water and natural resources below and above the surface of the land and in the continental shelf and within the territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone of Namibia shall belong to the state if they are not otherwise lawfully owned". ~

As the elected representatives of the people we must stop connivance; V a ~ b ~ e ~ m ~ c i t to this exploitation and this raping of the wealth of the nation/Namdeb, apart from the fact that it by-passed parliament and was never discussed or approved here as far as I can remember, is a joke. It is the *Joke* of the Century. It is not a 50/50 story as we are made to believe. All the support services are performed by De Beers, and all the sub-contracting go to De Beers or Anglo-American. So Namdeb is the sham-mest sham you can imagine. I hear about Epangelo Mining but thus far there has not been any separation of fact from fiction in that regard. There used to be something called the Namibia Development Corporation, NDC but they are probably now somewhere in corruption's cemetery. Comrade Speaker, there should be a state body that would take care of Article 100 of our constitution, and that should be in the forefront and at the heart of industrial development on behalf of the Namibian people. And I am not talking about nationalisation, for that is a separate topic completely that should be approached differently.

The (South African) Industrial Development Corporation, IDC used to hold about 13% of the ownership of Rossing Uranium, and it may still be the case. There was hardly any aspect of economic and industrial life that the IDC was not involved in. It created Sasol, Iscor, Imcor Zinc, the Uis tin mine, Oamites mining, Soekor, Safmarine, and Swawek. Another co-owner of Rossing Uranium was Urangesellschaft, the public company owned by the German government. Their presence in Rossing Uranium was a matter of strategic importance for the German government as Urangesellschaft was responsible for the supply of uranium to the German nuclear industry. They were entitled to 10% of Rossing's yearly production, to build German's nuclear industry to where it stands now, and that is how our resources have always been available for harvesting by imperialists. Unfortunately, comrade Speaker, that is still the stand of affairs with regard to the

Namibian economy. Not only have we abandoned the potential approach of Decree no. 1, we have continued to foster the same neo-colonial relationship with the imperialist countries and trans-national corporations. In this context I note that Areva, the European and international nuclear giant has entered the Namibian uranium scene. Somewhere in the past, the roads of Urangesellschaft and Areva had come together. Areva is now a front-line name in the international nuclear energy and Renewable Energy industry. Areva should not only mine uranium and carry off uranium oxide to France. It is high time that the knowledge and expertise that Areva has be applied on Namibian soil and in the further processing of uranium and expanding the scope of ownership by Namibia of her own natural resources. Despite what's happened in Japan both back in 1945 and again now, I am optimistic that there is a bright future in nuclear energy.

The Minister for Finance always introduces the budget by sketching a global picture of the economy and this year is no exception. She presents it as if, as a nation we are all happy members of the global human family, living happily together or confronting common economic threats such as the recent so-called global financial meltdown as a united, global popular front.

The fact of the matter (and this she sometimes neglects to point out), is that we live in a big, bad world; a big, bad, global neighbourhood. It is an Empire run by a few individuals, on behalf of a few other individuals, who own all of the money (actually owning all the banks together). The so-called financial meltdown is a crisis that is systemic to the capitalist economy; it has happened before and it shall verily happen again. It was not an avoidable mistake brought about by the policies of the Bush administration or the Labour Party government (as is now alleged by Mr. David Cameron in the UK in justification of the infamous economic "cuts" applied by the current Conservative government), but an unavoidable crash, that is a direct outcome of capitalist greed, made in Wall Street. When such a crash happens as we have observed, the handing out of "life vests" and "parachutes" becomes a matter of blood being thicker than water, and poor Namibia is no blood relations with anybody in Washington. We saw how the money was dished out, by the trillion, to the likes of General Motors in the USA, in 2009 and 2010, and how, on the other hand the poor cousins in the capitalist Empire, such as Greece, Iceland and Ireland, (and now Portugal) have been treated. Bailout conditions have been a very bitter pill indeed, often involving the poor working people of these countries having to bear with and suffer the most austere of measures and conditions imposed by the European Central Bank, and the cuts as is currently the case in the UK.

Comrade Speaker, Imperialism is not a style of government, it is a system that ensure and has as its ultimate aim, the private control and private appropriation of world resources. Initially that system was held in place through the (military) subjugation, political subordination and socio-economic political domination of one nation by another, called colonialism. Later and more recently the crude political subjugation of nations by other nations has been replaced by a smarter, more nuanced system that involves remote controlling: neo-colonialism. We are all subjected to this subtle control, comrade Speaker, though perhaps it may not be always palatable to admit this. At the core of this system is the Trans-national Corporation, or TNC. The trans-national corporation



employs capital as investment in order to ultimately reap the fruits in terms of profits. We usually welcome this move for it brings with it employment to our people. So far so good. Whereas the early trans-national corporation was firmly rooted in a few big Capitalist economies, Paris, London, Berlin or New York, today's trans-national corporation is a true global citizen, owned through mergers and acquisitions by financial big guns from all over and run as perhaps a number of loosely related conglomerates.

Decree No.1 and Namibia's natural resources.

Anyone remember Decree No.1? The full title was: Decree No.1 for the Protection of the Natural Resources of Namibia. It was decreed by the United Nations' Council for Namibia on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1974. After the UN General Assembly terminated Apartheid South Africa's mandate over Namibia on 27th October 1966, the international community and of course the Namibian liberation movement had continued to be concerned over, and condemned the plunder of the Namibian wealth by Apartheid South Africa and other foreign economic interests. The UN Security Council had passed a resolution (No. 283) in 1970, calling upon all States to discourage their nationals or companies of their nationality not under direct government control, from investing or obtaining concessions in Namibia, and, to that end, to withhold protection of such investments against claims of a future government of Namibia. That was the background to the UN Council for Namibia's Decree No.1, which ... "prohibited any person or entity, whether a body corporate or unincorporated, from searching for, prospecting for, exploring for, taking, extracting, mining, processing, refining, using, selling, exporting, or distributing any natural resources, whether animal or mineral, situated or found to be situated within the territorial limits of Namibia, without the explicit consent and permission of the Council for Namibia."

Chapter 21 of the Constitution, Article 145 (2): "Nothing contained in this Constitution shall be construed as recognizing in any way the validity of the Administration of Namibia by the Government of South Africa or by the Administrator General appointed by the Government of the Republic of South Africa."

Comrade Speaker, it is on us that the nation relies, but for more than twenty years we have neglected to act in the people's interests. This I think, as government and as a parliament of elected representatives, we have neglected, have failed, to do immediately after independence. I must say the trend that the successive administrations have followed since independence in 1990 and the overall ideological direction of the Swapo Party sheds more light on the way Swapo Party has treated the NUNW since independence. Comrade Speaker, the current relationship between Swapo Party and the Labour Movement has led to the castration of the NUNW, and apparently now, Swapo Party did this in order to ensure there wouldn't be any opposition to the neo-liberal policies followed by the government.. For quite some time, and on several occasions when I was still with the NUNW we have debated the issue of the ideal relationship between the ruling party and the workers movement, with Swapo Party insisting that there should be no autonomy on the side of the trade union movement (late Moses Garoeb). The current debacle involving the GIPF, the government and the trade unions is

not only an excellent example of how Swapo Party smothers the independent voice of the workers, but also of the politically disastrous outcomes of that specific kind of relationship.

Comrade Speaker, it has been more than four years since we passed a motion in this House, introduced by the Honourable Kuaima Riruako, MP., and Paramount Chief of the Herero, on the genocide and other crimes committed by the Imperial German Government against Namibians at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The motion we passed was very explicit, namely that the Namibian parliament and people demand reparations from the German government, heirs and representatives of the former, imperial government of Germany. One gets the impression that the Namibian government is not fully committed to the reparations demand, and that it is dragging its feet on this important issue. It is high time that the Namibian/German relationship be transformed into a true sisterly, equal and equitable relationship, from the present one that seem to suggest that we are Germany's neo-colony. I was exasperated recently, comrade Speaker, to read in one of the local daily newspapers that referred to Germany as "the hand that feeds" us as Namibia! How does Germany with the help of some of the media, manoeuvre herself from the position of Perpetrator of Genocides to that of Benefactor and Father Christmas? The government must seek to pursue an equal and equitable relationship between our two governments and peoples, one that ensures that justice is also done, seen to be done and swiftly so, too.

The matter of resources is inextricably linked to land and the access of poor working people to land. "Willing seller - willing buyer" is a neo-liberal concept that implies that governments and peoples cannot and should not interfere with so-called market forces. For twenty years our government has failed to deliver on land by pursuing this willing seller- willing buyer principle. It's therefore time to change gear and change the land farming system in favour of the working people. The constitution is very clear on the issue and should be the guide. It looks like as long as Swapo Party is in power there won't be any effective land reform in this country. Further, the land issue is tied up with the dual classification of the land into communal and so-called "commercial areas" and the maintenance and perpetuation of the "red line" or cordon fence. I know I ruffle feathers when I even touch on the topic. The truth is that we continue to live hemmed in into homelands and Bantustans, only we have developed effective euphemisms for them: communal area, commercial area!!

#### Article 98: Principles of Economic Order.

"The economic order of Namibia shall be based on the principles of a mixed economy with the objective of securing economic growth, prosperity and a life of human dignity for all Namibians." (six forms of property are listed: public; private; joint public-private; co-operative; co-ownership; small-scale family.) Where in the budget do we see the reflection of this principle?

Vision 2030: it's a good thing for a nation to set a vision for itself. It needs to be owned by the nation and it needs to make sense and be realistic. It requires a totally different relationship amongst the constituent parts of the nation, and everyone must see and feel

that they belong. That is what we need to work towards in Namibia: the State must not belong and act on behalf of the rich while handing out alms to the poor.. The poor must be engaged as equals: its their thing. The state must be truly developmental and not capitalist.. Perhaps we are closer to moving in that direction as a nation. I am optimistic. Thank you; I support the vote.

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