

Budget exposes the ANC's nefarious, autocratic instincts

by Ashor Sarupen MP – DA Member on the Appropriations Committee

Madame Speaker,

A former cabinet minister once said, if the Rand falls, we will pick it up. Well, in line with her wishes, the ongoing lockdown crisis had not only dropped the Rand, but added 3 million people to the unemployment queue, alongside hunger and depravation.

However, what we have seen, both in this adjustment budget and in the conduct of the ANC during this crisis shows that there is no plan to pick anything up. There is only an agenda to gouge through corruption, with little concern for the needs of millions of people now below the bread line.

The spouse of the President's spokesperson, and an ANC PEC member scored a R125 million contract for personal protective equipment, possibly implicating the MMC for Corporate Services in Johannesburg as well. In fact, the SIU is investigating contracts awarded to 90 companies in Gauteng alone, with a total of 2.2-billion rand. There are investigations ongoing in Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Eastern Cape for Covid-corruption.

Added to this, we are seeing government officials act with impunity, ignoring regulations for emergency procurement, working with so-called service providers to loot coffers of the state, and even dish out government food relief in ANC regalia, when they aren't stealing food parcels themselves.

Former President Kgalema Motlanthe remarked in 2007 that, under the ANC government, every contract and tender is conceived with the intention of corruption and undue enrichment. 13 years later, at a time of our most dire need, an entire crisis that should have galvanized action to protect both lives and livelihoods has instead seen the ANC follow through on its worst instincts and default to type.

Madame Speaker, let me turn my attention to some specifics that show how emergency relief spending during Covid is all mismatched to the needs of society:

- R2.2 billion has been cut from the Education Infrastructure Grant while schools still have pit latrines;
- R1.7 billion has been cut to the Human Settlement Development Grant while millions live in informal settles without the space to social distance;
- R611 million was cut in funding for food security at a time when people are starving, and farmers are dealing with a protracted drought.

What is even more unconscionable is that the Government is giving more money to the army and police – a total of R6.6 billion, than they are to the Health Department, which is only getting an additional R2.9 billion. No wonder there are so few, if any, field hospitals outside the Western Cape, and the ones that do exist, like in Gauteng, have furniture store bought beds and no medical equipment in sight. If the state was serious about the Covid-19 response, the necessary R50 billion investment into healthcare would have found expression in the adjustment budget.

Instead what we have is an emerging autocracy, using the cover of Covid-19 to rule by diktat, making regulations about wearing t-shirts only as undergarments, setting up command councils to sidestep

constitutional democracy, and more money being spent on the security apparatuses than health. This budget exposes the ANC's nefarious, autocratic instincts.