

The ANC is grieving the end of its dream

By Geordin Hill-Lewis MP – DA Shadow Minister of Finance

Over the last 12 years, the ANC government has spent R192.5 billion bailing out bankrupt State-owned entities (SOEs).

In addition to this, they have committed the government to a further R383.2 billion in State guarantees.

These guarantees are bailouts by stealth, because of course these companies have no ability to repay these loans, and so eventually they will be repaid by the public.

They should better be called 'guaranteed future bailouts'.

Together, these bailouts and guaranteed future bailouts have brought our country's finances to the point of ruin.

We have paid for this all with mountains of more debt, and what do we have to show for it?

Transnet cannot run a railway network, and train tracks are being stolen from what seems right in front of them. Eskom cannot produce enough electricity. SAA cannot fly. Denel is insolvent. The Land Bank has defaulted.

Every State-owned company is broken and bankrupt.

The Minister of Finance started with an astonishing admission last week, when he set out how we are now back to the same financial position that the ANC inherited at the end of apartheid.

Three decades obliterated.

We are now back to where we started.

I genuinely feel sorry for ANC members. I'm sure at one point some joined the ANC wanting to do good, to change South Africa for the better. And now they have to defend the comprehensive disaster that is the ANC's legacy in government.

One question which has interested me for some time, is the question of "why".

Why does the ANC persist with that which has so obviously and utterly failed?

Why does the ANC persist in the propping up of State-owned companies whose failure is so large that it threatens the very continuity of the State?

On the face of it, this is pure insanity.

One reason is that the ANC sees itself and the State as the same thing. "We are the State, and the State is the people."

Linked to this, is the ANC's historical core belief that it alone is the source of progress in society, and that it has a total monopoly on truth. "What we say is true and good, for no other reason than because we say it".

So, what we see now is the ANC going through the Kubler-Ross five stages of grief.

We are past the first stage, denial.

Notice how the ANC does not even try to mount any arguments in favour of the SOEs anymore. No one still makes a case for why SAA should be bailed out, because they know it should not be.

After denial comes anger.

We saw it last week, when the Minister of Public Enterprises in his angry and arrogant manner tried to lecture the country on why only he could understand what he was doing.

South Africans, the media, the DA – we're just all wrong, ignorant or uneducated, the Minister says.

I think he will find the public do not take kindly to his insults.

After anger comes bargaining, and we've seen that too.

"We can see this isn't working", says the ANC, "but maybe we can keep control and get a private investor".

Except, you can't.

"This isn't really a bailout", we've heard from the Minister of Finance. "This time it's different".

Except, it is a bailout, and it isn't any different.

I think he will find the public don't take kindly to their intelligence being insulted.

Of course, this is another bailout, and it won't be the last. We all know that. Of course, there is nothing different. It's still the same SAA, and there's no private investor.

This is just the ANC bargaining with itself.

After bargaining, comes depression.

The common signs of which are withdrawal from society – perhaps to a mountain farm.

Disinterest in work.

Dining alone on hastily prepared meals.

Posting said meals to social media, not just for interest but more as a cry for help.

And finally, comes acceptance.

The ANC isn't there yet. Definitely not.

But it is coming. Try as it might, the truth is inescapable.

So, if the ANC is demonstrating all the signs of the five stages of grief, then the question is what is it grieving?

It is grieving the end of the dream of the developmental state.

It is grieving its dream of using the State-owned companies to drive its vision of a State-led economy.

More fundamentally, it is grieving the death of its own core beliefs – that the ANC is the only source of progress, and that the ANC is always right.

It is over.

The full panoply of ANC failure is on national display.

Acceptance is all that is left.

The only question is how long it will take for the ANC to reach acceptance, and how much more South Africans will have to sacrifice in the process.

How many new hospitals will not be built? How many new schools will not be built? How many new teachers and doctors will not be trained? How many crimes will go unsolved?

What will the total human cost be of the ANC's grieving?

I predict it will be much higher still.

Unless we break the cycle with a clear alternative.

That is what the DA will offer.

We will break the cycle of State failure and public poverty.

State ownership is not the same as public ownership.

We will shut down failing SOEs and sell those we can to the public.

We will take power away from the hands of a failing State, and give choice, competition, ownership, agency to real people.

We must cut the ANC's power cord and give power to the people.

That is how we will bring real change and real hope for South Africa's future.

Thank you