

## Minister what is your creed for the public service?

By **Dr Mimmy Gondwe MP** - DA Shadow Deputy Minister for Public Service and Administration

House Chairperson,

Allow to me to begin my contribution to the debate this afternoon with a quote from the late Senator Margaret Madeline Chase Smith, the first woman in US history to serve in both Houses of the US Congress.

Senator Smith once said and I quote: *"My creed is that public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation with full recognition that every human being is entitled to courtesy and consideration, that constructive criticism is not only to be expected but sought, that smears are not only to be expected but fought, that honour is to be earned, not bought."*

House Chairperson our public service is, regrettably, still a far cry from this creed so aptly articulated by Senator Smith for the mere reason that it is currently characterised by, amongst other things, corruption and a complete and utter disregard or disdain for the legislation and regulations governing the public service.

House Chairperson, in February this year, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) informed the Portfolio Committee that, as at January 2021, they were 484 public service employees possibly conducting business with the state notwithstanding that the Public Service Regulations of 2016 prohibit public service employees from conducting business with the state. What is even more disheartening is that despite investigations being conducted, in this regard, not a single public service employee has been prosecuted and convicted for conducting business with the state.

I have to ask Hon Minister - what exactly is your creed for the public service because according to the Department of Social Development (DSD) almost 40 000 public service employees applied for the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD grant. This grant was most certainly not intended for public service employees who are drawing a monthly salary from state coffers. This grant was intended to provide some form or measure of socio-economic relief to the most vulnerable and distressed members of our society in the face of the pandemic but close to 40 000 public service employees applied for it!

Furthermore, according to the DSD, 241 of these public service employees received this grant, of R350, for the month of May 2020. And yet again, to date, no definitive or decisive disciplinary or legal action has been taken against the implicated public service employees.

Honourable Minister, my creed for the public service, is that public service employees who are found guilty of conducting business with the state and of unlawfully applying for and/or receiving any SASSA administered grant such as the SRD grant should be summarily prosecuted

and convicted or else these brazen and blatant acts of corruption within the public service will continue unabated and unchecked.

My creed is further that the DPSA should be playing a more pronounced and conspicuous role in rooting out these brazen and blatant acts of corruption. The DPSA should, ideally, be at the forefront of enforcing compliance by public service employees and individual government departments with the prescripts of the Public Service Act and the PAM Act and ought to also be looking into ways of holding them fully accountable for not doing so.

Honourable Minister what is your creed for the public service as government is set to spend a mind blowing R4,5 billion remunerating over 6000 public service employees who are currently “sitting at home” on suspension with full pay pending the finalisation of their disciplinary cases. After forking out R2, 4 billion in the 2019/20 financial year, the South African tax payer is set to fork out another R2, 1 billion to pay suspended public service employees on full pay for the 2020/21 financial year.

My creed, Honourable Minister, is that the DPSA should be monitoring whether government departments are prioritising the finalisation of these disciplinary cases and also exerting pressure on government departments to finalise these cases as they are placing an unjustifiable and undue burden on the tax payer.

I ask you again Honourable Minister, what exactly is your creed for the public service?

I thank you.