

# Courage, dear heart

By **Dr Leon Schreiber MP** - DA Shadow Minister for Public Service and Administration

Honourable Speaker, honourable President,

“Trying times need courage.”

These words anchored last week’s State of the Nation Address.

Like he did for most of his speech, the President correctly diagnosed the problem: we urgently need courageous leadership if we are to turn around the desperate state of our country.

In the context of the ANC, dumping the state-centric model that has devastated our economy in favour of private-sector-led growth, and fixing our broken state, will indeed require political courage.

Accurate though the President’s diagnosis is, it also gives rise to a fundamental question.

Who, exactly, is it that needs to develop the courage to reform our state and economy?

It is certainly not the people of South Africa who are lacking in courage.

The President spoke about a lady who was arrested for selling dog beds next to the road without a permit.

She certainly did not lack for courage as she worked to put food on her family’s table despite the constant threat of harassment and arrest by Minister Bheki Cele’s officers.

Equally, there is nothing anyone can teach South African farmers about courage, as they continue to produce food for our nation despite the spectre of brutal farm murders and broken infrastructure.

Victims of gender-based violence who work every day to rebuild shattered lives represent the very incarnation of courage.

So, we know it is not the people of South Africa who need a helping of courage.

But what of your courage, Mr President?

Where was your courage when you said you’d rather fall on your sword than reveal how taxpayer money is used to fund ANC campaigns?

Where was your courage when you testified before the State Capture Commission?

Instead of doing the courageous thing by acknowledging before judge Zondo that the cadre deployment committee you chaired between 2013 and 2018 enabled state capture, you tried to convince him that the committee is innocent.

Thanks to the DA's work in exposing the minutes of the cadre deployment committee, we now know this is not true.

The minutes make it clear that cadre deployment is the very foundation of state capture.

They show that, during a period of only three years, the ANC deployment committee interfered in appointments to at least 88 different government departments and entities, including chapter nine institutions and the Constitutional Court.

The minutes show that the deployment committee even reprimanded you, the President of this country, when you forgot to ask for its permission to appoint an advisory council.

Rather than stand up to this unconstitutional political interference, you cowered and apologised.

Does that sound like courage to you, Mr President?

Fortunately, in only two weeks' time, the State Capture Commission is set to confirm that the DA has been right about cadre deployment all along.

I'd like to present a letter of my own to this House today, which was sent by the State Capture Commission to the ANC's lawyers on 21 January.

In response to the ANC's claim that its deployment committee does not unconstitutionally influence state appointments and that minutes of its operation should therefore remain hidden, Acting Chief Justice Zondo wrote the following – and I quote:

“It is in the public interest that it be known how the deployment committee of the ruling party influences decisions that are made by state institutions or government functionaries in regard to certain appointments.”

This finding completely destroys President Ramaphosa's deceitful claims to the contrary.

So, here's the question that the President needs to answer when he responds to this debate tomorrow:

When the State Capture Commission confirms at the end of this month that the ANC cadre deployment committee he chaired is the key cause of corruption and state capture, will he support the DA's efforts to abolish it?

South Africans deserve a courageous answer tomorrow to this fundamental question.

Honourable Speaker,

There can be little doubt that the President has finally realised just how badly his fellow cadres have broken the state.

But instead of summoning the courage to fix the state by ending cadre deployment, he is now openly working to bypass the government he is in charge of.

Over 50 people now work in the office of the President, trying to do the things that Cabinet Ministers are supposed to be doing.

The State Security Agency, the head of investment and infrastructure, tourism envoys and now a unit for reducing red tape are all run from the Presidency.

It is as clear as daylight that, like the rest of the country, the President has no confidence in this Cabinet or in government departments.

But the way to fix our broken state it not to try and run away from the problem like he is currently doing.

The way to fix it is to fire the Cabinet that has failed South Africa, and to replace cadre deployment with professional appointments.

But the President simply lacks the courage to do this.

Honourable Speaker,

Most fundamentally, if the pledges made by the President are to mean anything, he has to find the courage to finally choose South Africa over the ANC.

For the past four years, he has consistently put the unity of his political party ahead of the needs of the people.

This short-sighted strategy of appeasing the enemies of progress has been a catastrophe.

It has caused enormous hardship for the victims of a failing state and economy.

And, last year, it also resulted in the worst election in the history of the ANC, with the party losing its national majority, and on its way out the door in 2024.

It will take courage to break out of this vicious cycle.

The courage to accept that the ANC needs to split for South Africa to have a chance.

The courage to actually implement the DA policies he outlined at SONA.

The courage to end cadre deployment.

And if that causes the RET thieves to pack up and leave, for goodness' sake man, let them go!

Let them go and isolate themselves along with the EFF, while the rest of us focus on fixing our country!

Mr President, embracing the DA policies outlined in your SONA will cost you the RET faction, but it will save your legacy and our country.

We've already seen a glimpse of what this courageous new world could look like, right here in Parliament.

During the vote on whether to investigate the Public Protector, the DA more than compensated for the EFF and RET members of your party who opposed the motion.

We must now do the same for all the other reforms our country so desperately needs.

Mr President, it is clearly not the people of South Africa who require a lesson in courage.

The whole problem is that their President has none.

There can be no better example of this than the fact that the President has already backpedalled from his SONA address at the first sign of resistance from his comrades.

Just yesterday, in his newsletter, the President tried to walk back the truthful statement that it is the private sector, rather than government that creates jobs.

Your speech made it very clear that you know what to do to fix South Africa.

But the minute you encounter the slightest resistance, your resolve crumbles.

Does that sound like courage to you, Mr President?

Ours is a country held hostage by a single man's political cowardice.

For all our sakes, we better hope that the President takes his own advice:

"Trying times need courage."

Thank you.