

## **Imminent South African Spring**

By **Michael Bagraim MP** – DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour

On behalf of the Democratic Alliance, I stand here to express my disgust.

We have an unemployment rate at almost 50% and growing. The Arab Spring in 2011 was caused by an unemployment rate of 30%.

The Minister has the gall to expect political parties to approve and endorse a budget that is not working. Every entity within the Department has failed. Even the entity that demonstrates excellence, the CCMA, has had its budget cut destroying its efficacy.

One could imagine that we are living through *Alice through the Looking Glass* – “*Don’t keep him waiting, child! Why, his time is worth a thousand pounds a minute.*” This is not our current Minister of Employment and Labour but the guard on this fictional train trip. When Alice refused the answer came “*why, the smoke alone is worth a thousand pounds a puff*”.

The Minister expects an endorsement for a department that presides over the second worst productivity in the world and almost the highest unemployment in the world. This is the very Department that failed the workforce during Covid-19 and largely refuses to help injured workers through the Compensation Fund.

We are not living in Alice in Wonderland but South Africa in 2022.

Government wants to blame the unemployment crisis on foreign workers who make up less than 2% of the actual workforce. Meanwhile we have almost 12 million unemployed South Africans who are willing and able to join the job market.

Even the long-time trusted sweetheart trade union movement Cosatu have at last found their members to have woken up and realised that the ANC and President Ramaphosa are using them as voting fodder.

It is clear that government is doing nothing for the unemployed and it is becoming more and more obvious that they are also doing nothing for those who are currently in jobs.

The workers of South Africa must know by now their numbers are dwindling and with the current system under an ANC government, those jobs are being threatened. I appeal to the workers of South Africa to have a very careful look at their alliance partners and to see both the ANC and the Communist Party don’t even pay their own direct workers.

To the workers of South Africa: how can you trust the ANC and an ANC government in these circumstances?

Your members have spoken out loud and clear this year in the May Day celebrations. It in fact turns out that May Day in South Africa in 2022 was not a celebration but a declaration of a dead alliance.

Every year like clockwork, the Minister and his Department present a budget. Every year they applaud what they themselves have done and ask South Africans to spend hard-earned income on broken entities within the Department. It was Mark Twain who said, “*Get your facts first, and then you can distort them*”

*as you please*". The problem here is that the Minister hasn't got the facts but he is even distorting the Director-General's fantasy of performance.

It is a crying shame to see that the unemployed of South Africa have no voice at all.

Government set up a talk shop, Nedlac, which does not represent the 12 million unemployed hungry people.

We have been told time and time again that it is small business that will be the engine room for job creation of the future. The ANC government refuses to deregulate small business and uncouple them from the bargaining councils. Our previous Minister of Finance, Tito Mboweni, called for this uncoupling and he was rudely condemned. It would have cost us nothing and created a million jobs.

Cosatu's post May Day statement talks of the growing frustration among workers in South Africa. They are pushing for change. The first step is to rid ourselves of the ANC.

2.2 million workers lost their jobs in the last two years. Even this was on deaf ears in the ANC government.

Cosatu calls for a dismantling of the system of power and says, *"If workers sit down and do nothing, it will mean that they accept the death sentence that is being handed to them by the political and business power structure"*.

I call on the workers of South Africa to join hands with the Democratic Alliance and to talk to a political party that they can trust.

The President a decade ago was a director of Lonmin. We all recall the murder of 34 miners and the wounding of 78 workers. This happened just after President Ramaphosa asked the police to act firmly against these dastardly criminal *"trade unionists"*. Was it not an act of political suicide to then have the gall to speak to mine workers on the tenth anniversary of this massacre?

Workers must also remember the three-year wage agreement signed by the ANC government and the ANC administration. After honouring the first two years, this cowardly government hid behind a technical point to try and save them from the embarrassment of an increase, which they couldn't afford. This duplicitous behaviour has become the hallmark of an ANC government.

A Democratic Alliance government in 2024 will negotiate in good faith and will create jobs. A DA government in the Western Province can point to fair treatment, honest negotiation and job growth. There is no magic in this; it is pure clean government and respect for the working class of South Africa.