

## **Scopa failure to hold executive accountable**

**By Alf Lees, DA Member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Madam Speaker

There will be very few South Africans who do not believe that there has been little or no accountability for malfeasance in South Africa over the past 15 years. Most South Africans would probably blame politicians and in a very real sense they are correct. Certainly, the Zondo Commission found Parliament to have been delinquent.

Whilst there is much rhetoric in parliament about accountability and so-called “consequence management”, a term that is a favourite amongst ANC MP’s, there are seldom, in my opinion never, members of the Executive who are actually held accountable.

Even in SCOPA that has the legacy of the Arms Deal debacle and the brave actions of Ken Andrew, Gavin Woods, Andrew Feinstein and Barbara Hogan to follow has failed to hold a single member of the Executive to account.

When ANC SCOPA member Mervin Dirks, whatever his agenda may have been, proposed that President Ramaphosa be held accountable for his public statement that State budgets had been used for ANC party funding, the members of the ANC in SCOPA simply voted against summoning President Ramaphosa to SCOPA and let him off the hook. In this instance the SCOPA chair side-stepped taking a position and didn’t vote.

Retribution against Dirks followed swiftly with his summary removal from SCOPA and his subsequent disappearance into obscurity. With no delay at all there was immediate consequence management for Mervin Dirks. President Ramaphosa, the perceived icon of the fight for accountability, was tschup still as the Hon Dirks was given his marching orders by the ANC.

During a SCOPA meeting on the Beitbridge border fence debacle, Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula, the then Defense Minister, justified the actions of soldiers to allow the fence to be cut in order to give illegal entry into SA for Zimbabweans as well as to give the illegal entrants from Zimbabwe rides in military vehicles to do their shopping and to visit clinics in Messina .

When the DA attempted to ensure that the recommendations in the SCOPA report on the Beitbridge Border Fence washing line included action to be taken against Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula the ANC refused to include any such recommendation. This report, that was ATC'd in November 2020 some two years ago, has still not been adopted by Parliament.

A discussion on accountability failure would be incomplete without mention of the failure for Hon Pravin Gordhan to be held accountable for the SAA/Takatso deal that he announced some 17 months ago.

Despite numerous attempts during SCOPA meetings and through written parliamentary questions to get details of the SAA/Takatso deal, Hon Pravin Gordhan has steadfastly refused to provide details and to be held accountable for the immoral wastage of some R14,7billion to keep SAA operational as a failed SOE. One can't but wonder what is being hidden in this stone-walling by Minister Gordhan.

Even Dudu Myeni the delinquent director of SAA used to provide full and detailed replies to questions but Hon Gordhan the State Capture crusader just refuses to give substantive replies.

Despite some clucking of tongues from some members, SCOPA has allowed Minister Gordhan to escape accountability for 17 months.

A culture of accountability is yet a far-off dream that will require a very different parliament before it is accomplished.

As Alan Paton wrote in 1948 the year that gave birth to Apartheid, so to today do we "**Cry the Beloved Country**".