



ANC Whip

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2008 State of the Nation Address

This year's State of the Nation Address debate was arguably one of the most significant in our new democracy. It has been delivered against the background of a successful 52nd National Conference, an NEC Lekgotla that has put in place an organizational timetable and identified departmental responsibilities and a Cabinet Lekgotla that has assessed the party priorities for the next five years and its impact upon Government's programmes

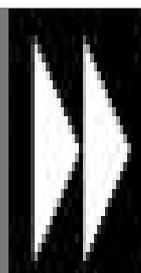
This year is the last full year in which the African National Congress will continue to implement the 2004 Manifesto. Our debate this year on the President's address was influenced by the political significance of this year. The debate highlighted both the achievements and challenges faced by our government since 2004. We also reflected on the new programme of the ANC, informed by National Conference resolutions. The Polokwane Conference reflected both continuity and change insofar as policy is concerned, to ensure that we are strategically positioned to deal with the ever shifting balance of domestic and global forces. Therefore the State of the Nation Address debate afforded us an opportunity to reflect on these issues. The debate was successful in taking on board the urgent tasks arising from the National Conference resolutions.

The battle of ideas during the debate also revolved around values and morals, ideas and principles. The theme of the January the 8th Statement "The year of Mass Mobilisation to build a caring society" is critical in the build up to both the elections and serving as a foundation upon which to build the 5 year programme to the centenary in 2012. The themes emphasized in the State of the Nation Address captured fundamental programmes through which our country needed to revolutionise its service delivery programme. "Business Unusual" is a call to all to work in a new way and with a new sense of urgency. The "National War Room for a War against Poverty" provides the space for further elaboration on the January 8th NEC Statement regarding our fight against poverty and underdevelopment. Of importance was ensuring that the debate clearly outlines the measures needed to respond

directly to the situation that the masses of our people face. 'Unite in Action/Act in Unity' is a call that stresses the message that, whatever position one occupies in the movement, the Executive or society, all must work together to achieve common goals set by the movement. The 1982 Theme of "Unity in Action" is rekindled for this year given its significance as we deepen the National Democratic Revolution.

State of the Nation Debate:

- The ANC is a United Force!
- No Two Centres of Power



The ANC is a united force!

Lumka Yengeni

As early as 1992 the ANC prepared itself for the challenges that would emanate from the establishment of a democratic society. In anticipation of those challenges the ANC produced a document "The Ready to Govern".

That document acknowledged that "South Africa had been a closed society with many restrictions on the flow of information, the structure of the media resources, skills, language policy and social deprivation have undermined access to information for the majority of the population." The Polokwane Conference of the ANC like many conferences before took resolutions that are aimed at transforming the SA media.

Amongst those is on unity and coherence of the movement:- The ANC is one of the oldest liberation movements in the continent, and in the world over, it had demonstrated the capacity to unite and to lead contrary to what the SA media and the opposition parties are propagating "the so-called cracks and disunity and the imminent splitting the ANC.

This resolution is aimed at strengthening the unity amongst ourselves as the ruling party and the alliance partners and the broader democratic movements. The Polokwane Conference also took a resolution "on the battle of ideas".

The essence of this resolution is that the ANC must take full responsibility in communicating its values, policies and principles have molded the ANC to be unique and outstanding in the face of the world. It is not an accident of political history that the SA media and the opposition are waging an ideological war against the ANC and its leadership.

There are pretencies from certain quotas that those in the media are

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innocent. They are not influenced/ impacted by the political dynamics of the society, their views are objective – they go further to say journalists and editors are independent.

The ANC resolution on the tribunal suggests that a debate must take place on the feasibility of this matter precisely because other bodies like the ombudsman have not been able to protect the rights of citizens when they felt aggrieved by the media.

The knee jerk response of the print media to the resolution confirms our worst fears. Their attack mode suggest that this is the beginning of the closing down of newspapers in the republic! Question is why is the media rubbishing the idea and not enter into a serious debate on the matter?

Let the media publish the entirety of the ANC resolution so that citizens are afforded equal opportunity to engage and debate the matter rather than to be told by the print media what to think.

Whilst we are debating these issues it needs to be stated categorically that as long as we do not have diversity of views in the print media in SA and that as long as we do not have newspapers owned by the black, poverty stricken masses, these problems will exist forever.

The ANC has always championed the cause of diversity of views and ownership in the media.

The resolution on 60% funding increase on the SABC is aimed to free the public broadcaster from the dictatorship of the commercials.

We do not want the SABC to be the lapdog of government or of the ANC or of any other party for that matter. We want them to be a proper public broadcaster that informs and entertains all our people in their diversity.

SABC must stop to be the mouthpiece of big business and certain powerful politicians. It must be the mouthpiece of the most noble aspirations of South Africans in their entirety.

The danger of not having the diversity of views and ownership in the media is that one dominant view that reflects economic ownership patterns in the print media is imposed on everyone without any alternative view finding its way into the pages of newspapers.

For example, we are told when the ANC leadership announced the appointment of the ANC Chief Whip and chairperson of Caucus, this was purging of the so-called Mbeki supporters.

The fact that the NEC took a decision that these leadership positions must be held by NEC members so that the ruling party is better able to exercise direct leadership of its MPs and caucus has never found prominence in the pages of newspapers.

What we are told by all newspapers without exception is that the new NEC has a major programme of purging those that did not vote for it at Polokwane. Of course there has been no purge of anyone on the basis that they supported someone else at Polokwane.

My worry here is why is here no space given to the ANC leadership to explain themselves on these

issues, as prominently as they are attacked in the front pages? The attack on the ANC leadership for purging is a transparent attempt by the media and opposition to intimidate the ANC leadership from resolutely implementing the Polokwane resolutions. Polokwane is a historic event to the poor masses of our country and therefore it cannot be the business as usual. That is disregard of people's wishes. Why did we have a conference? The ANC will effect change when ever they see it necessary. Let us be clear! The media and the opposition can shout and scream, they can jump up and down but we will not be intimidated – those Polokwane Conference Resolutions will be implemented and to prove the correctness of these resolutions – come the 2009 general elections – the ANC will be voted for resoundingly by the masses of the

people and we will be put back in government. Before Polokwane the media and its bevy of analysts were full of horror stories about what will happen if and when Jacob Zuma becomes president of the ANC. Polokwane has come and gone – Jacob Zuma is now President of the ANC and the skies have not fallen! The ANC is indestructible – we are now busy uniting our forces, sharpening our spears in anticipation of taking on the opposition together with its media come 2009 elections. And I have no doubt in my mind that the ANC will emerge victorious and, the opposition and its media will remain defeated with their long and smelly tails in between their legs! The leadership that emerged from Polokwane was democratically elected by branch delegates of the ANC from the length and breadth of the country through a transparent democratic process – the DA and

the media may not like Zuma and certain members of the new NEC – But we expect them to uphold and respect the integrity and outcomes of that democratic process. The cheap demand by the DA and ID to dissolve parliament and pass a vote of no confidence on President Mbeki cannot go without challenge. The ANC rejects these infantile cheap shots from this discredited bunch of complainers – This president and this parliament is going no where! Cde Mbeki will continue to be a pain in your necks not only until the end of his term but also until the end of his days! Parliament will dissolve only after we defeat you in the next elections and you will be back in your few, little, miserable opposition benches!

■ *Lumka Yengeni is ANC Member of Parliament. This is her speech during National Assembly Debate on State of the Nation Address*

There are no two centres of power

Andrew Mlangeni

What is central to me and I believe to all the governments through out the whole world is to better the lives of all the people in our respective countries. If government objectives and programmes that are put in place are not aimed at addressing this important issue, then there is no point in having a government. To me to better the lives of all our people is central. In spite of the challenges in the supply of electricity in which our country finds itself, the President in his speech delivered to this House last Friday has assured the country that the government remains firm in its commitments to continue to build South Africa that has given hope to all our people. The President pointed out to his speech that we should put all our

energies towards realizing the objective of making the lives of all our people better than before. Our policies in every aspect of our lives are in place and what needs to be done is to implement them in a way that is different from the past. This is what I understand by “Business Unusual”. Our country is faced with many challenges ranging from health, education, poverty, unemployment and so on. To meet these challenges and remain true to our ideal of building a caring society, everybody must come on board. In the language of the January 8th Statement of the ANC, this is the year of Mass Mobilisation towards building a caring society. We are already meeting some of these challenges.

More houses are being built, more funds are being made available every year by the national treasury to increase the pension grants for the elderly and the school feeding schemes in some schools. As ANC cadres we should admit that in spite of the several efforts made by the government in alleviating poverty, many families remain caught up in deep poverty, therefore, this should not be allowed to continue. That is why the President pointed out that there is a need for a “National War Room for War Against Poverty” and that should bring together some government departments such as Social Development, Provincial and Local government. These are some of the stumbling blocks towards building a caring society. I have been a member of the ANC for more than 60 years.

I studied Political Science at varsity and obtained an honours degree in Political Science, but I have never ever read books or heard of a government whose aim is to create a caring society for its people. Only the ANC can do that because it leads and lives.

Some people are calling for the dissolution of Parliament and for fresh elections to take place, others are saying the President and his Cabinet must resign because he has failed to solve the energy crisis. It is a serious allegation to say I quote "We cannot trust the President". If you think the ANC is divided and some will, therefore, support you in your opportunistic tendencies, we challenge you to move a motion of no confidence now not tomorrow and see what will happen. The ANC is a united force. We will thrash you. Nevertheless, we still appeal to you to go out and mobilize the people of South Africa to work together with the government and all other sectors in the country in preparing the country for the FIFA Confederations Cup in 2009 and most importantly the 2010 Soccer World Cup. For the benefit of South Africa the government has poured large sums of money into making these events a success.

The infrastructure is being attended to and stadia are being built and others are being renovated. Our airports are being extended and renovated, roads are being repaired and widened. It was hard to win the bid and when we did, the whole of South Africa rejoiced. We care for our society.

Let us not disappoint the people of South Africa and the whole African continent which is fully supportive of our efforts to make these events a success.

In 1996 I pointed out that sport contributes greatly to the health, wellbeing and identity of individuals. Most of us will agree that a worker, in order to be productive in his or her field of work, has to be healthy. One of the central roles that sport can play in the life of human being is to promote good health.

By providing facilities such as football grounds, tennis courts, rugby fields, golf courses, and so on, and so forth, our young and old citizens of our country will be able to play and therefore be healthy. Fewer people will need medical treatment and we are all aware of the high costs of medicines.

Sport is a nation builder, it builds bridges between communities, thus enabling them to interact socially, culturally, economically and in many other ways.

These are some of the challenges with which we are faced. The ANC-lead government has, since coming into power in 1994, continued the struggle to make certain that social and economic transformation takes place so that the lives of all our people improve.

Those people who talk of two centres of power are making a serious mistake. All of us deployed here in Parliament are carrying out the decisions and the resolutions of our **m o v e m e n t**. Whatever position one occupies in the ANC, or government, all of us must work together to achieve the goals set by the ANC.

There are no two centres of power, there is only one centre and that centre is the ANC. We have no dictators in the ANC.

The President of the ANC is not a dictator. He does not tell us what to do. Our actions are guided by the decisions of a collective – the National Executive Committee of the ANC. That concept of two centres of power is foreign to the ANC. We don't know it.

Let us go out and mobilize the people for the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup and let us continue to be a caring society. Let us unite to meet the challenges that are facing us as a people of this country.

■ **Andrew Mlangeni**
(*isithwalandwe*) is ANC MP. This is his speech during National Assembly Debate on State of the Nation Address

For more speeches on the Debate, please visit
www.anc.org.za/caucus/