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**NO DOUBLE-SPEAK!
NO FLATTERY!
NO SUBVERSION OF THE
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION!**

It is an open secret that there is no love lost between Mr Nelson Mandela and President Thabo Mbeki, each representing a faction in the ANC.

Things have taken such a turn that Mandela has been sidelined, ignored and abused. He, in turn, has taken to boycotting what are regarded as important events in the calendar of celebrations of the ANC.

It will be noted that he and his close comrade Ahmed Kathrada were not present at the opening of the Rivonia Museum. Nor was he present at the 90th anniversary of the founding of the ANC. He chose, instead, to send a message to be read out. When the leadership in charge of the occasion

decided to merely mention the fact of the message and not to read it out, Mandela threatened to go to the press. The threat had the desired effect and his message was read out.

For two months prior to the recent press conference held by Mandela on the Aids issue, he tried in vain to contact President Mbeki with the view to getting the latter to attend a press conference on Aids. It was only when that failed that he settled for second best – Jacob Zuma, Motlanthe, Ngonyama and Essop Pahad.¹

Those who watched the event on television, will recall Mandela going against the very heart of the ANC position on nevirapine for pregnant mothers by insisting that those patients who required the drug should be given it. He also made the remark that there was a perception that the ANC was insensitive to the suffering of the sick and dying. The viewers will also recall the embarrassment he caused Jacob Zuma by asking him to back his position in his capacity as Vice President. Zuma recoiled and mumbled something such decisions having to be collective.

Having publicly taken a stand against the leadership of the ANC on the Aids issue Mandela had to do some **fancy back-peddalling** to deflect the accusation of a public display of disloyalty to the ANC.

He stated as an article of faith that if he had any criticism to make of the ANC, he had sufficient channels to do so among officials of the ANC; its National Working Committee and the National Executive Committee. He stated emphatically that he would never go outside these bodies. Yet that is precisely what he did at the press conference!

Adhering to the past pattern of following criticism with lavish compliments, he went on to sing the praise of Thabo Mbeki in these words:

“There is nobody in the history of this country – no Prime Minister, no President can ever boast that he has done better than Thabo Mbeki. And that is why I support him and that is why I will strongly support him for the second term...”

¹ Mandela's own explanation as to why Mbeki did not attend the press conference, namely, he (Mbeki had to attend a Commonwealth meeting is not credible. Why couldn't Mbeki's attendance have been arranged on a date before or after the Commonwealth meeting?

At the press conference and repeated on the Tim Modise Radio Show on the 4th April 2002, Mandela asserted that the (ANC) government policy (regarding AIDS) was the best in the world but the problem was that the government was not communicating its policy sufficiently. However, after the major turn-around by the ANC on its AIDS policy, Mr Mandela stated that he was relieved that the South African government had *changed its policy on HIV/AIDS*. (Our emphasis) (The “ECHO” of the Natal Witness dated 25-4-2002). He does not explain why he was relieved when “the best policy in the world” was changed.

The back- pedalling and praise singing, however, did not save Mandela from a hot and hostile reception he received at the meeting of the National Executive Committee of the ANC which took place subsequent to the press conference.

This is how Alan Fine, Cape Editor of the Business Day, described what took place:

“According to one account of the meeting, Mandela’s presentation on Aids and the state of the ANC generally was repeatedly interrupted by hostile heckling. He then had to leave for a while to attend a previously scheduled meeting with a visiting dignitary.

In his absence, a co-ordinated flood of abuse was directed at him. It was apparently led by House of Assembly deputy speaker Baleka Mbete.² She was followed in short order by Tshwete,³ ...Dumisani Makhaye and S’bu Ndebele and Mokaba.”⁴

These persons who are very much Mandela’s juniors in age, rank and reputation would not have dared to do what they did without first having had and obtained the nod from Mbeki. This incident confirms our claim of the very strained relations between Mbeki and Mandela.

Of great significance is the nature and character of the statements made by Mandela. Mandela who had been under tremendous pressure from various

² Also a beneficiary of the driving licence scam.

³ While Tshwete was a prisoner on Robben Island, he was the leader of the pro-Mandela faction against the Govan Mbeki faction in what was called the “General Section” i.e. the section housing the largest number of political prisoners on the Island. He has clearly switched sides.

⁴ The article appeared on the 8th April 2002 in “The Natal Witness” under the heading “Presidential challenge.”

quarters to make a public statement on AIDS and to support the demand from civil society that the anti-AIDS drugs be given to pregnant mothers, did so in his own way at the press conference.

The AIDS issue is a simple one. It has to be fought until it is eradicated from society. Only the lunatic fringe, the AIDS dissidents, believes otherwise and whose most vocal spokesman, at present, is Peter Mokhaba. Peter Mokhaba, the rabble rouser (“Kill the farmer! Kill the Boer”); the agent of the Security Police of the racist-oppressive regime of the NATS; the former Deputy Minister of Tourism who could not account for millions of rand under his control. Having him as their leading spokesman, the AIDS dissident group has had the final nail hammered in their coffin.

In spite of the simplicity of the matter and in spite of the universal unanimity (for all practical purposes) of the medical profession on the nature of the disease and its treatment, the ANC government has taken a contrary position. It is a position which has invited much criticism, condemnation, ridicule and contempt from all over the world. In South Africa, the ANC stands alone. No person or organisation worth anything supports the ANC position.

In considering Mandela’s statements we are witnessing political manoeuvring at its worst. We are witnessing double-speak. We are witnessing flattery i.e. praise which is insincere and false.

Why doesn’t Mandela come out in the open and state clearly what is on his mind? What is the point of having the “best constitution in the world” if you cannot openly and publicly expound your views on a matter of the greatest importance?

Why confine debates, discussions and differences behind heavily bolted doors? If their claim to be public representatives has to have validity, then why not take the public into their confidence? How beneficial for democracy if debates on such weighty matters like the Aids issue were to take place in the streets, in the homes, in the pubs, in the shebeens, in the workplaces! Having been exposed to the viewpoints of the various factions, these debates among the people must of necessity raise the consciousness of the people.

Public debates and discussions can only enhance democracy. Understanding the issues and having the opportunity to express one's views, the likelihood of explosive manifestations of disagreements in the form of violence and destructiveness will be drastically reduced.

Debates and discussions, which raise the consciousness of the people, will also lay the foundation for the best defence and deterrence against dictatorships and tyrannies.

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