

SUNDAY TRIBUNE NEWS OCTOBER 28 2001

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The NNP is cosying up to the ANC for an alliance which will secure its leaders top government posts, write Greg Ardé and Xolisa Vapi

NNP leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk's final nail in the Democratic Alliance coffin was a secret meeting early this week with ANC national chairman Motlatsi Lekota.

A coalition between the former foes will have massive national implications involving a political realignment of hundreds of councillors and members of parliament.

Already the ANC was celebrating in the Western Cape with talk of taking the province and the City of Cape Town - both firmly in DA hands - with the NNP as the majority shareholder.

Neither the ANC nor NNP party would publicly commit to an alliance, but events of the week, including Lekota's intention to pilot new legislation to allow NNP members to cross to the ANC without having to stand for re-election, point to a deal having been hatched.

Loyalties

Lekota said: "The ANC has resolved to effect legislation to make it possible in the short term for elected representatives to realign their political loyalties without forfeiting their seats. This is to be implemented starting in the coming week."

The move is aimed at averting costly by-elections in the country's 297 municipalities in which the DA is largely represented.

If Lekota's move is constitutionally impossible, the DA's break-up will see the dissolution of councils across the country.

It would also neutralise the Democratic Party as the official opposition to the ANC in national parliament.

In Durban this would mean that the DP-NNP alliance would lose the 83 seats it won under the banner of the DA in last November's municipal elections, and forfeit other parties.

In Durban, the ANC, with already 85 of 200 council

seats, would secure a clear majority to do as it pleases in the Umkhonto.

The series of by-elections would cost millions of rands and would be a direct result of the breakdown in relations between DA leader Tony Leon and van Schalkwyk, his deputy.

DP members of the DA believe Van Schalkwyk and his advisor, Renier Schoeman, are going to ditch the DA after securing plum positions in Mbeki's cabinet.

Getting into bed with the ANC is also likely to secure a number of top government positions for NNP members.

The move entrenches the ANC's style of co-optive governance in which it has already secured the IFP and Azapo.

DA Durban leader Lyn Ploos van Amstel said: "There's talk that Marthinus and Renier have been offered cabinet posts by the ANC and that's the sweetener, but NNP councillors are furious because they haven't been consulted."

Speaking to the Tribune after a marathon national teleconference of NNP members, Schoeman said: "It's all over, that much is clear ... but, speculation about positions is wild."

"The NNP is committed to the principle of co-operative governance, based on the Inkatha Freedom Party model (currently in government partnership with the ANC)."

ANC spokesman Smuts Ngonyama said: "There has been an agreement within the ANC that in principle people should be given a choice."

"There would have to be by-elections, but given their costs, some legal arrangement needs to be made in the form of legislation to obviate this - to give people a choice without necessarily going through a second round of local government elections."

Asked how NNP's suspension from the DA would affect councillors and MPs,

Schoeman said: "Their obligation is to serve the voters, so it's business as usual."

While the NNP says it will form a new party and alliances with other parties, it has only "suspended" its participation from the DA.

An angry Tony Leon slammed the NNP's move as "surely be the greatest and most shameful capitulation in South African political history."

But, he said, the DA would not disintegrate without the NNP.

Van Schalkwyk said the NNP intended to transform itself "into a party for the new South Africa".

"The DA is on the road to nowhere, and we don't want to go nowhere."

The NNP will avoid a complete withdrawal, according to DP members, until it sees how quickly the ANC produces Lekota's legislation.

An immediate withdrawal would mean the councillors would receive the R14 000 monthly take-home wages that were approved a fortnight ago.

The ANC's Nomusa Dube said there had been no talk about a shift in alliances in Durban that might result from the parting of ways.

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45 MPs on HIV drugs - claim

MELANIE PETERS

FIERY Pan Africanist Congress MP Patricia de Lille says she knows of 45 colleagues who are taking anti-retroviral drugs and has called on them to declare their HIV status.

Their use of the drug is in spite of President Thabo Mbeki insisting that the side effects of the medication that prolongs the lives of people with HIV could be worse than Aids itself.

De Lille this week questioned Mbeki's stance on the drugs. "Why is it toxic only for the poor people of this country who cannot afford it ... ?"

De Lille said she could not reveal her sources but knew of 45 MPs who were taking the anti-Aids cocktail.

She said these politicians, as well as other role models, should declare their status to help destigmatise the illness.

De Lille said she had a problem with the president's single source of information from the internet.

It was a sad day for South Africa when statistics provided by its own Medical

Research Council were overlooked. Politicians should stick to politics and leave research to scientists, she said.

She also criticised members of the ANC who followed Mbeki "blindly".

Presidential spokesman Bheki Khumalo said De Lille's attack was political rhetoric and the president's office would not dignify it with a reply.

This week the president cautioned MPs using anti-Aids drugs to ensure they were fully informed about the toxicity risks after De Lille questioned government's "hypocrisy" on the matter.

He referred De Lille to the websites for the US Centre for Disease Control.

"You will see when these matters are dealt with by people who are serious and approach these things from the point of health - not propaganda, not religious faith - that there are very many complex questions that we have to deal with ..."

A source within the ANC said it was impossible to find out how many people were taking anti-retrovirals - or who they are. "Ms de Lille must tell us where she gets this information from."