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MPs want to keep their other jobs

The parliamentary ethics subcommittee is divided over MPs' outside financial interests, write
Eddie Koch and Marion Edmunds

STRONG pressure for South African MPs to continue earning lucrative salaries on top of their pay from Parliament is coming from inside an ethics subcommittee set up to devise rules on the controversial issue.

Six of nine MPs on the parliamentary committee, chaired by Water Minister Kader Asmal, advocate the right of MPs to hold second jobs. And at least three committee members are themselves employed outside parliament, according to the latest edition of *Parliamentary Whip*.

"The composition of the sub-committee means it is almost certain to recommend that on this first issue of principle, MPs will continue to be entitled to more than one source of income, even though conflicts of

interest may arise," says the newsletter, published by the Institute for a Democratic South Africa.

The paper quotes a number of ethics committee members, who voice strong support for their right to continue holding company directorships or salary-earning posts outside the Assembly — even though a large number of MPs are pushing for Parliament to be seen as a full-time job.

Another feature emerging from Idasa's investigation is that attitudes toward the question of MPs' remuneration do not conform to party political lines.

Whip quotes Gill Marcus, ANC MP and chair of the finance portfolio in the Assembly, as saying the country needs parliamentarians who devote all their time to making good laws and acting as an effective check on

the Cabinet.

"MPs who do their job diligently should not have time for anything else, and I believe that anyone who is earning from other sources is undoubtedly making a choice about time usage, which ultimately can only be detrimental to their work as an MP," says Marcus.

Furthermore, an MP gains real insight into the workings of government. This insight should be utilised for the benefit of everyone, not primarily for those who have the resources to pay for consultations. Consultations for selected bodies or individuals for further remuneration pose enormous ethical problems if an MP is paid by ordinary taxpayers. Whose interests, then, do they serve?

But Dave Dalling, another ANC member who sits on the ethics committee, has a different view. He is a director of two companies and told *Whip* that he had to "earn other

money" in order to maintain two children at university.

Douglas Gibson of the Democratic Party, also on the committee, is a practising partner in a law firm, while a third member, Piet Mathee from the National Party, practices law on an ad hoc basis.

NP committee member Danie Schutte disagrees with Mathee. He has given up his legal practice because he realises that "parliamentary work, especially in this new dispensation, requires total commitment on the part of MPs".

Schutte was reluctant to ban his colleagues from making extra money outside parliament, but said he did not favour lobbying for outside interests. Consultancies and directorships in companies that benefited from direct access to parliamentary information were "grey areas that required further careful thought".

ANC member Phillip Dexter, a former trade unionist, told the *Mail & Guardian* that "outside interests can-

not be forbidden as long as there is complete transparency, full disclosure to the public". He added that this should include all public figures and not just MPs.

Dexter said remuneration was confused by the debate around the gravy train. He said the debate focuses specifically on the questions of disclosure and whether lobbying by MPs is permissible.

Recent meetings of the ethics subcommittee have focused on the need for full disclosure as the best way to resolve any conflict of interest between parliamentary and outside work.

Asmal recently announced the ANC would advocate that its MPs make their disclosures, which are currently mandatory but restricted to scrutiny by the organisation's national executive, open to the public — even though other political parties have not yet adopted a code on these issues.

Farmers are ready to sail on the winds of change

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The fiery bluster of right-wing farmers has given way to a more pragmatic approach over the new labour tenants' Bill, reports **Eddie Koch**

EDDIE VON MALTITZ swaggered around with a 9mm parabolium strapped to his waist. The *vierkleur*, pennant of the ultra-right, was flying at the entrance. And murmurs of discontent rumbled through the ranks as thousands of farmers who had mustered to resist the government's "communist" land policies were asked to welcome the media.

So, when the boot of a scowling man six feet and some inches tall crushed my toes, I put it down to harassment of the kind usually experienced by journalists at these rallies. "Elskuus," said the giant who, in case I couldn't understand his language, added that he was "so sorry man".

That was the mood that stamped itself on the showgrounds in Newcastle, a grim coal-mining town in KwaZulu-Natal, where some 4 000 boers rolled up in bakkies and Mercedes-Benzes from around the country to present Land Affairs minister Derek Hanekom with the biggest challenge yet to his land reform laws.

There were occasional outbursts of fiery rhetoric. "Take a trip to the battlefields around here if you want to understand what the land means to us," a farmer told journalists during tea break, pointing to the hills where Boer commandos fought British troops and Zulu warriors in the wars of colonial conquest that wracked this region last century.

The media crews came expecting a brigade of khaki-clad men who would vow to throw the country back into the violent events that marred the run-up to this country's freedom elections. But the temper that resonated among most of the men who packed the Newcastle hall, many dressed as if they were at a Sunday church service, was pragmatic, civil, even sensible.

And, up on the podium, the proceedings were being orchestrated not by apocalyptic poets of the far-right but by a yuppie lawyer in a pin-stripe suit and silk tie who, despite the occasional diatribe against Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom, spoke the language of appeasement.

The Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Bill, passed by the Cabinet and gazetted last month so that the public can comment on it before it becomes law, was the main target of attack, mainly because, unlike earlier land redistribution measures, it provides for land to be expropriated from the current owners of "labour farms".



The haves and the have nots: White landowners (left) will be forced to sell land to labour tenants (above) if the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Bill becomes law

PHOTOGRAPHS: HENNER FRANKFELD

from the current owners of "labour farms".

These are large estates, mainly in the south-eastern areas of the Eastern Transvaal and the northern reaches of KwaZulu-Natal surrounding Newcastle, where some 40 000 black families have lived for generations, and now provide free, or virtually free, labour in exchange for a small patch of land for subsistence farming.

"The proposals for action that I am going to propose are quite drastic and dramatic," said the young lawyer called Phillip Nel. He heads up the Agricultural Employers' Organisation (AEO), which claims 7 000 farmers as members and organised the Newcastle rally along with the Transvaal, Orange Free State and KwaZulu-Natal agricultural unions. "So I am going to give all of you a chance to make suggestions from the floor first."

What followed was lots of Hanekom bashing. "Let him come and work next to me with those lily-white hands," said one man. "We should ask Mandela to give him a blitzkursus (crash course) in what to do," said another. "We have got a wise president, but there are people in his midst who don't know what they are doing."

Then ... that voice of reason again. "It doesn't help to sit back and complain. We have to accept that agriculture has to undergo a transformation," said a farmer called Wessel Nel, to applause from the crowd. "April 27 has happened and the duty of organised agriculture is now to help. We are the people who can help to make sure that land is given to small-scale and productive farmers who work."

Now it was time for the young lawyer to present his "dramatic" proposals. There were four of them, each accepted in essence by the crowd as a way forward.

● It was demanded that a negotiating forum be set up comprising provincial and national officials from organised agriculture to negotiate with the government on how to implement land reform.

In the meantime, the labour tenants' Bill should be remanded and Hanekom should appoint a "designated person" to liaise on a full-time basis with farmers on issues and conflicts arising from the labour tenant system.

● "We understand that there are needs for (black) people to acquire land. We share this viewpoint," said Nel. He proceeded to propose that all owners of "labour farms" should consider selling their estates to the government, strictly at market rates and on a "willing-buyer-willing-seller basis", so that the minister could have "more land than he dreamt of" for redistribution. Farms were distributed among the crowd so that farmers willing to sell could give

the AEO a mandate to offer up their land.

● A demand that a committee of farmers from each of the 17 districts affected by the labour tenants' Bill be set up so that ordinary farmers "can get together to discuss and negotiate this thing".

● And then the really radical resolution, one taken straight from the strategies of township civic organisations: "If Derek Hanekom goes on with this law, then we reserve the right as farmers to stop all payments to the provinces and the central government. If we are to be arrested, then we will say 'Where must we report so we can do it now?'."

The farmers cheered in jubilation. One of them tried to pass a motion of no confidence in the Minister of Land Affairs, but was asked by an agricultural union official on the podium to withdraw it, "because we might pick up some dissent if we go that far". And voices in the crowd asked if they could go soon after lunchtime because many of them had driven long distances and had work to do before dark.

Commercial farms in South Africa, most of them currently owned by white men, provide five to six million of the poorest people in the countryside with their only means of survival. Eddie von Maltitz, leader of the ultra-right Resistance Against Communism, puts it in racist terms. "Take the white man out of Africa and Africa will die."

John Sender, a left-wing academic from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, argues that there is a need for land redistribution to be balanced with policies which keep productive and adaptable owners — "those capable of achieving the macroeconomic goals of raising employment, real wages, agro-industrial output, and exports" — on the land.

The rally at Newcastle was a measure of the way a substantial section of white farmers is responding to the land question. They accept that redistribution is inevitable and that their labour policies will have to change. Their demands have shifted from reaction to requests for the right to participate in the pace and style of change.

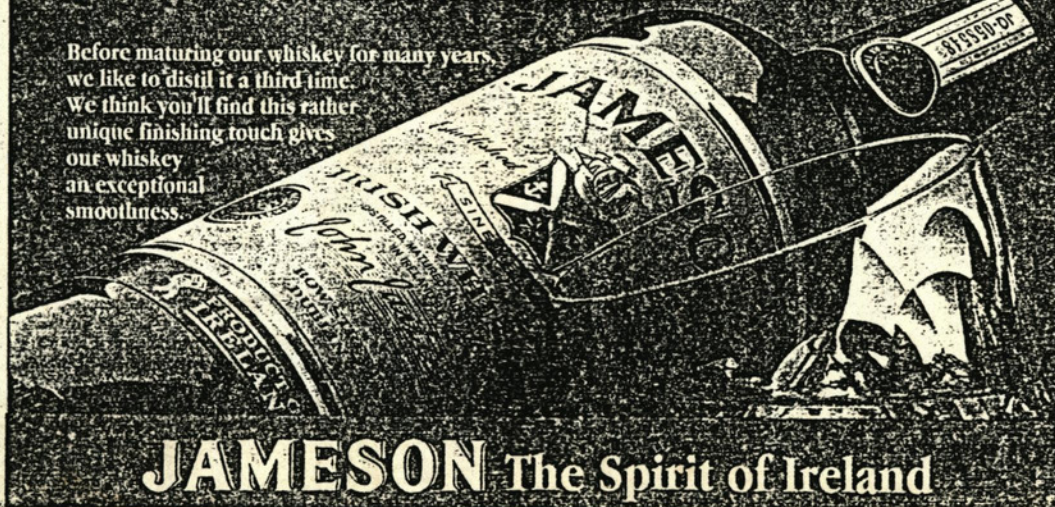
The meeting was also a signal that the neo-fascist movements of this country are on the wane, overshadowed by pragmatic men of the soil who want to rebuild a productive system in the countryside for themselves and their children, who will inhabit the countryside in generations to come.

There were plenty of Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging members in the crowd. Von Maltitz told me after the meeting. "They want to give this approach a chance to work. We want to try and help this Hanekom and to become players in the game. We'll keep our eye on the ball, because if we don't, we know we'll lose it."

Derek Hanekom would do well to hear their voices. That way the paramilitary uniforms can remain where they are now, being eaten by moths. The khaki-clad prophets of the right can remain on their farms, drinking brandy and coke. And the battlefields of KwaZulu-Natal can stay as they should be, places for inquisitive tourists to come and visit in peace.

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