

SOWETAN Tuesday March 2

Question time for parties

POLITICAL parties will be wooing labour union Solidarity's 120 000 members ahead of the April 14 election, the union said after talks with the Freedom Front Plus (FF+) yesterday.

"We have decided to go into this election independently," said union spokesman Dirk Hermann, but said they would advise their members to vote for parties that met with certain requirements.

This decision follows the union's national congress last week in which it was decided to judge parties according to an "eight-point job card".

FF+ leader, Pieter Mulder, was the first to meet Solidarity's chief executive Flip Buys about the job card in Centurion yesterday.

Mulder described the meeting as fruitful and constructive. He advised Solidarity not only to look at party promises, but also at what they had achieved in the past year.

Solidarity will meet the Inkatha Freedom Party's Mangosuthu Buthelezi today to discuss the job card and to sign an accord.

The accord concerns affirmative action and ensuring that past imbalances are not replaced with new ones. - Sapa

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IFP bid to make AA fair

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The union and the party said in a statement on Monday the deal would be signed by IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Solidarity's chief executive Flip Buys.

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cally on the balance that has to be reached between addressing the imbalances of the past, and the prevention of new or recurring imbalances, through the implementation of affirmative action," the statement read.

"The accord also proposes the development of an improved code of good practice that will provide clear guidelines for companies/employers on how to fairly apply affirmative action." - Sapa

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Poor are getting poorer - Shenge

By Ido Lekota

INKATHA Freedom Party leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi has called on the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to face the "reality" of unemployment and poverty.

Buthelezi says many rural people were better-off 10 years ago than they are now because of unemployment and poverty.

"Whether we like it or not, poverty in rural areas has increased, especially because of unemployment and the collapse of subsistence agriculture, which has introduced hunger and despair where previously there was enough food for everyone to eat, and strong bonds of social solidarity which provided assistance to all those in need," says Buthelezi in an open letter appearing in *Sowetan* today.

Buthelezi blames the situation on what he perceives as the destruction of subsistence farming and lack of investment in rural areas.

"The Government's Growth Employment and Redistribution policy has failed

to deliver the envisaged 6% growth rate that would have created more jobs," he says in the letter.

"Instead there have been massive job losses in the textile and agricultural sector."

A week ago ANC national executive committee member Dumisani Makhaye launched a scathing attack on Buthelezi, accusing him of suggesting that life was better during apartheid in South Africa.

Makhaye suggested that Buthelezi retire from politics because such a view went against the changes that the Government had brought and strives for.

He was responding to the statement which Buthelezi had made in Parliament during a debate on President Thabo Mbeki's State of the Nation address.

Responding to Makhaye's sentiments, Buthelezi says in the letter that while democracy in 1994 brought positive changes in people's lives, "successes should not make us oblivious to failures".

But he acknowledges that the Government has created social programmes to alleviate the suffering of the poor.

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Donations for political parties

STANDARD Bank and the Liberty Group will donate R5 million and R1,5 million respectively towards political parties' election funding, Standard chairman Derek Cooper said yesterday.

Cooper said this was a demonstration of their "commitment to the democratic process", and was a fitting celebration of the 10th anniversary of democracy in South Africa.

He was speaking to the media at Standard Bank's head office in Johannesburg.

The money would be allocated in proportion to the parties' representation in Parliament, in the same way the Independent Electoral Commission distributes funds, said Cooper.

Half of the money would be given now, and the other half distributed to parties that succeed in winning seats in the April election.

This means the African National Congress will get a pre-election windfall of just over R2 million, whereas parties such as the Independent Democrats, the Pan-Africanist Congress, and the Freedom Alliance (with four or less seats in Parliament) get R32 500 each.

Cooper said it was important that Standard Bank be completely transparent in this process. The bank was not taking a political line, but rather "supporting the

democratic process", and "objectively reflecting what the people of South Africa have decided".

Asked what the point of the funding was, if not to influence the outcome of the elections, Cooper said money was needed to run a political organisation and the board could think of "no better way" to promote democracy in South Africa.

The large banks differ in their approach to political funding. FirstRand has never funded political parties, and definitely does not plan to change its policy, said spokeswoman Sam Moss.

Nedcor also does not fund political organisations.

Absa has funded the major parties according to their representation in Parliament since 1998, but was not willing to disclose precise amounts.

Previously, Standard Bank and the Liberty Group have also had a no-funding policy, but Cooper said the board was "very happy" to support this departure from its policy.

The R5 million and R1,5 million would not be siphoned from the existing funding budget, said Standard Bank spokesman Erik Larsen. "It will certainly not be at the expense of other worthy projects supported by Standard Bank." - *Sapa*

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IN AN open letter titled "Bow out, Shenge", African National Congress leader Dumisani Makhaye argues that I should retire from politics on account of what he erroneously thinks I said.

He thinks I said apartheid was better than our democracy when, in fact, I merely said many rural people were better off 10 years ago than they are now because of increased unemployment and poverty.

I regret that he can't tell the difference between these two statements.

Knowing what an unscrupulous propagandist he is, I am not surprised he went out of his way to deliberately distort my statements. He has never had scruples, religious or conscious.

He did not grasp my statement.

There is no doubt that our democracy has achieved enormously, not only by liberating people from political oppression, but by promoting social and economic development.

I do not detract from the impressive record of the Government, of which I have been a part in delivering services in an unprecedented measure, especially in terms of water, sanitation, electricity and housing.

But our successes should not make us oblivious to failures and shortcomings.

The point I raised is unpleasant but true. If people ignore it or twist it or disregard it, they do not care sufficiently about the poor.

Whether we like it or not, poverty in rural areas has increased, especially because of unemployment and the collapse of subsistence agriculture.

This has introduced hunger and despair where previously there was enough food for everyone, and strong bonds of social solidarity that provided assistance to all those in need.

The disintegration of the social and economic fibre of rural areas is a real problem that is well known to me because I have spent my entire life among the poor, and my political choices have always been dictated to by my desire to alleviate their plight.

As anywhere else in the world, poverty elimination in this country requires more than populist slogans supported by pseudo-intellectualism.

The question as to whether or not some of our rural areas are better off now than they were 10 years ago cannot be fobbed by equating this query with support for apartheid.

Ten years ago the internal migration of people speeded up, with the removal of all restrictions on movement from rural to urban areas.

Informal settlements and shantytowns sprang up all over in urban and semi-rural areas.

Simultaneously, the country's isolation from the global market was ended. The economy was integrated with the global market.

How dare Makhaye tell me what to do!

Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party and Minister of Home Affairs, responds to Dumisani Makhaye of the African National Congress who last week called on him to resign now if he did not want history to judge him unfavourably

South African textiles, for example, had to compete with foreign companies.

Agriculture had to compete with subsidised products from the European Union and United States.

Thousands of jobs were shed in the process. Globalisation in South Africa, as elsewhere, has had devastating effects on certain sectors of the economy.

Unemployment grew faster than new jobs could be created. To counter the effects of these developments, the Government has created social programmes to alleviate suffering.

But social spending or the amelioration of immediate suffering does not amount to elimination of poverty.

The virtual destruction of subsistence farming, combined with the lack of investment in rural areas, has resulted in lower production through the inability of people to use the productive capacity of the land.

There can be a great deal of debate, for example, on whether the large investment in the Ngura (Coega) project would have been better spent on developing projects in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape.

Similarly, there can be a question whether the sugar cane crop is better than the production of food in KwaZulu-Natal's subsistence areas.

In Parliament I asked whether people in certain rural areas are better off now than they were 10 years ago.

Some will respond by saying "no". Others will point to social grants and say "yes".

Still, others will say "no".

analysis without which poverty could not be eliminated. What we do need are not experts in the flinging of pejoratives and insults, such as Makhaye.

We need a calm analysis of the serious situation we face, for if we are not careful we may find ourselves with a revolt on our hands. This is what I was talking about, but there was no time for me to expand.

Should I retire because I am telling an unpleasant truth? Should I retire because I want to carry forward our struggle for liberation until the plight of the poor has been alleviated?

Throughout my life I have pursued a vision of accelerated economic development, which brings together the interests of the rich and the poor.

In fact, unless the plight of the poor is addressed, there is no security nor hope for the rich.

Conversely, only by accelerating economic growth can employment be generated in a measure sufficient for promoting development that can reach the most remote rural areas.

We have failed to accelerate our rate of economic growth. Our Government, and its macro-economic strategy Gear, indicated that 6% was the minimal economic growth necessary to begin a cycle of development that could eventually begin redressing our country's social problems.

Instead we have had development within a 2% range. Therefore we have failed on the basis of our own minimum targets.

Among the reasons for this failure is the fact that the South African Com-

gress of South African Trade Unions stopped the implementation of Gear.

Moreover, the participation of the SACP in our country's ruling party, together with our excessively rigid labour market legislation, have scared away would-be foreign investors.

The problem exists and is enormous, and people such as Makhaye, a communist, are not part of the solution but are squarely part of the problem.

Shooting the messenger does not make the problem go away. It is precisely because he comes from that background that he has no qualms of conscience about twisting my words to suit his plans as the hatchet boy and propagandist.

It is not for Makhaye to tell me when to retire, but only my constituency. It is my duty to continue my political career to ensure that our liberation struggle is not betrayed.

Some people feel that the liberation struggle is over because they have arrived at a position of power and comfort.

But from the perspective of the rural masses, to whom I belong, the situation is different and rural people are asking me to continue in my struggle and political commitment.

Only the people of South Africa can decide who should stay in politics and who should retire, and who the new president should be.

Were I the new President, accelerated economic growth and development in rural areas would be one of my Cabinet's priorities.

Makhaye mentioned people 10 years older than me. What makes him

think that I have a shorter political shelf life than them?

Nelson Mandela was unanimously elected in Parliament in 1994 when he was exactly my age.

Do the people who have given me more votes in KwaZulu Natal than anyone else in 1994, 1999 and 2000 do so because they are stupid?

They do so despite my party's limited resources. I am in my position because of the votes garnered in all these elections, not by a decree of my party propagandist.

God has given me sufficient strength and good health to be as strong and motivated.

It is my responsibility to continue to speak for those who have no voice, and cannot be represented by the likes of Makhaye.

It is my responsibility to continue pursuing the dream that one day all South Africans can be as prosperous and secure as the ruling white minority used to be in the past.

South Africans want me to pursue this dream and express this vision, which I have held for half a century.

I feel that the most important measure of the contribution I have to make to South Africa is still ahead and not behind me.

Issues relating to HIV-Aids, crime, unemployment, poverty and corruption, which I raised in this electoral campaign, are not of my choice but reflect real concerns of our families.

They are not new and I have voiced them for years in Parliament and other fora, just as for years I have voiced my growing concern about rural poverty.

It is peculiar that, after having failed to hear me for years, on the eve of elections, ANC leaders begin noticing, replying to and insulting me to avoid facing up to the issues.

My record of governance before 1994 is impeccable and my commitment after 1994 has always been consistent with the issues I raise.

South Africans should be concerned about the likes of Makhaye, who are not just hushing me off in the hope that I may go away, but are effectively denying the dramatic reality of HIV-Aids, crime, unemployment, poverty and corruption.

I am not surprised he chose to attack me.

I am, however, in good company as in the past he launched a virulent attack against an icon such as Mandela when he described him as "an agent for pharmaceutical companies" merely because Mandela called for the supply of anti-retrovirals to HIV-Aids victims who needed them.

Perhaps being attacked by the likes of him is in fact a compliment, even though a back-handed one.

I wish Makhaye to enlighten us by writing on the cost of Stalinism in Russia.