

BUSINESS DAY, Wednesday, October 24 2001

# Leon still on the war path

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Cape Editor

CAPE TOWN — It appears unlikely that Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Tony Leon softened his stance at the meeting with his deputy Marthinus van Schalkwyk yesterday, after weeks of tension and outright conflict between them.

The meeting came hours before former Cape Town mayor Peter Marais applied to the Cape Town High Court to review and set aside a decision by the DA's national management committee (NMC) requesting him to resign as mayor and terminating his party membership. The case will be heard on Friday.

Officials on both sides of the Democratic Party (DP)/New National Party (NNP) divide drew a veil of secrecy over yesterday's meeting, which took place at Van Schalkwyk's request.

However, a source within the DA said it would probably not be correct to come to the conclusion that it had been a "kiss-and-make-up" session between the two.

It is therefore likely that Van Schalkwyk and his colleagues are

now considering conditions laid down by Leon as a precondition for the survival of the alliance.

It is unlikely that the threat of disciplinary action against Van Schalkwyk has been withdrawn. In terms of positions taken previously by DA officials loyal to Leon, disciplinary action would become possible only if Van Schalkwyk and the NNP refuse to meet what Leon and his loyal followers see as the terms of the original alliance agreement.

This would include shutting down all NNP structures, including Van Schalkwyk's separate office. Leon's allies insist that this needs to be done so that Van Schalkwyk can no longer use these structures to mobilise his allies in the NNP against Leon's leadership and authority in the DA.

Despite his strong backing of Marais over the last few weeks, Van Schalkwyk's position is weakened by the NNP's weak electoral position outside the Western Cape, and its perilous financial situation illustrated by the debt forgiveness arrangement with Absa.

In a statement last night, Marais said that the grounds for his appli-

cation were that he was not treated fairly and that he was not given an opportunity to properly prepare himself for the case before the management committee.

"When my removal from office and expulsion from the DA could not be achieved through the Heath enquiry and the Rules Portfolio Committee of the City Council, Mr Tony Leon steam rolled a motion for my resignation and expulsion from the DA through the National Management Committee," Marais said.

"In the result the NMC could not properly have considered the matter, and its decisions were therefore wholly irrational, unreasonable and unjustifiable."

Marais said he had also asked the court for interim protection — that the "unlawful" actions of the committee be suspended until the decisions sought to be set aside were reviewed by the court.

"This entire costly exercise was really unnecessary. All I asked the NMC was to give me a chance to prepare my defence. Unfortunately it denied me this right. It left me with no alternative but to approach the court," he said. *With Sapa.*



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# Spectre of political baasskap still haunts SA

Charlene Smith

**P**OLITICAL expediency at multiparty negotiations on democracy have come back to haunt us. They have allowed the entrenchment of political baasskap, first in the African National Congress (ANC), and now most vividly in the sorry spectacle of the Democratic Alliance (DA) waging its internal battles through the media.

In the two top political parties, a pattern is emerging of democracy being selectively tweaked when a party boss feels threatened, or wants his way. Zwelinzima Vavi, secretary-general of the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu), referred to it this weekend when he suggested a review of the tripartite alliance.

He said claims by some ANC members that Cosatu intended to form a

separate political party were a ploy to divert the focus from real issues.

"This trend suppresses internal debates within the alliance. Cosatu should not allow itself to be blackmailed into silence," he said.

Normally, the DA could gloat at such comments. Now it cannot, as it has used similar tactics in the shameful Peter Marais saga.

As an example, it claimed New National Party (NNP) chairman Marthinus van Schalkwyk was not defending Marais because of concerns about democratic process, but because he wants to be Cape premier. So what? If democratic processes are followed, his ambitions will amount to nought.

Nothing like a little character assassination when the going gets tough.

Freedom of expression is a term in the constitution, but certainly not something practised in party ranks

and most definitely not when politicians speak in public. Their salaries are linked to a tautly held party line.

Democracy is an expedient sound bite, selectively practised. It is well known that President Thabo Mbeki rules the ANC with an iron hand. Dissent is firmly dealt with, albeit discreetly and within party structures. This is why barely a peep is heard from the ANC to contradict the president's AIDS stance, although privately many MPs and provincial MPs are bitterly unhappy with it.

When the Pan Africanist Congress removed leader Clarence Makwethu, for political ineptitude three years ago he underwent an internal disciplinary process and had the option of appealing to the national executive committee before being expelled.

However, the messy debacle the DA has put the country through has all the trappings of a tawdry divorce, a

disregard for democratic process and a clear example of the baas (DA leader Tony Leon) getting his way. It is not a happy spectacle from the party that claims to be the upholder of democratic fair play in this country.

Marais received no 4x4s, no houses, no-one died as a result of his actions or inactions, he took up no battles with scientists, shelved no reports, and yet the official opposition is cleaving itself apart because of his trying to change the names of two Cape Town streets? After the city council failed to make Leon's task easier by dismissing the mayor, and in fact cleared him, Leon then attempted to sack him. Marais, backed by NNP leader Van Schalkwyk, refused to go. Leon said he had the right, as party leader, to dismiss Marais. He does. But within a system the DA has frequently expressed unease about.

Party leaders within the current

system are encouraged not to be democrats, but kings. And King Tony, by ignoring the fact Marais has done no provable wrong — other than be a character the prissy business funders of the Democratic Party (DP) do not like — is in danger of abusing the principles he so often articulates.

The DP, by taking its brawl to the media, has failed an essential management lesson — you never, ever, fight through the media. Those that do find that everyone comes out of the tussle looking soiled. No effective leader should ever allow such a situation.

There is another important lesson — the DA wants to secure black votes.

Black voters have had 300 years of white bosses telling them what to do. Resentment runs deep. It's a shame the DA has allowed a process that again looks like white baasskap.

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