

Difference between the state and the party must be respected

THERE is a lot of talk about the need for political parties (once they become ruling parties) to respect the distinction between party and state.

This starts with the understanding that once they are in charge of the government, they no longer serve narrow party interests but the entire population. They cannot, therefore, ask for political affiliation before rendering the constitutionally guaranteed services to the SA population.

People have lost their jobs because of their "wrong" political affiliations. This became more pronounced after the formation of Cope. Even at local government level, some people who have openly displayed themselves as members of another party were told to go to their party for offices. This has not happened without some knowledge of the local,

and to a certain extent provincial, leadership of the government.

It is difficult to expect the regional and local structures of government to think and act otherwise when the highest decision-making structure of the ruling party ignored not only its own constitutional provisions on fair and due process, but that of the country and the rules of parliament when it dismissed former president Thabo Mbeki.

Post-Polokwane unleashed a new culture of undermining due process, and the use of state machinery to weed out opposition, both in the government and within the ruling party. The use of state resources to achieve party political agendas is the worst transgression of the party and state line. This then feeds on to other illegal actions in the conducting of business.

It is within this context that we need

to look at the awarding of a tender to Hitachi to build boilers at Eskom's Medupi power station. Chancellor House, an investment arm of the ANC, is a 25 percent shareholder in Hitachi.

Now, there are many schools of thought as to whether the association of the ANC with Hitachi had anything to do with the latter winning a R20-billion tender from Eskom. On the one hand, we have the treasurer of the ANC, Mathews Phosa, reported to have said that steps needed to be taken for the ANC to disinvest from Hitachi. On the other hand, Gwede Mantashe, the ANC secretary-general, is said to have stated there was nothing wrong with the ANC's association with Hitachi and the subsequent awarding of the Eskom tender to Hitachi.

These are two diametrically opposed pronouncements from very senior

members of the ANC. This raises the question as to whether the ANC has any policy directives on the conducting of business by itself and its senior members where this directly affects the rendering of services to the state.

Very interesting is the statement from the Institute of Directors. This institute supposedly stands for effective corporate governance in companies, and by extension any institutions of public interest. The institute is of the view that the public criticism levelled against Eskom for awarding the tender to Hitachi was unfair and unfounded.

The statement goes on to state that the Eskom board was appointed by the government. With the controversies of how these boards, including the SABC, are formed and how the ruling party has interfered with the appointments, the Institute of Directors still expects the

public to have absolute confidence in the board and its disassociation from the interests of the ruling party.

It is not so far back that the board of Eskom was not backed by the state when it instituted its mandate in dismissing its former CEO for plunging the parastatal into a management nightmare. This led to the loss of a talented and experienced manager, Bobby Godsel.

When it was reported there was another bidder with a more suitable bid than Hitachi's, it was not unreasonable for any person to conclude that Hitachi got the bid because of its association with the ruling party. And this can only be described as corruption that disregards the plight of the public, the majority of whom are the poor whom the ruling party claim to represent.

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