

23 September 2008

NEHAWU STATEMENT ON THE RECALL OF PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI AND CABINET RESIGNATIONS

The National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) welcomes the progressive ANC NEC decision to recall President Thabo Mbeki. This is a decisive action which will close the old difficult chapter in our movement which had brought uncertainty about the direction of our national democratic revolution. Unity of our movement and the nation is paramount and every effort to remove obstacles to such unity should be greatly welcomed.

We are carefully observing that some cabinet ministers and deputy ministers have refused to heed the call by the ANC President Jacob Zuma to stay put and have resigned. We hope that some of those that have resigned did so to abide with the constitutional imperatives and are available for re-appointment by the new President of the Republic of South Africa.

There are important issues that NEHAWU want to highlight on the decision to recall the State President viz.:

Why the Recall?

Firstly, the principle of recall - removing an elected official before the end of the term has become an entrenched radical democratic practice within our movement and should be embraced by our society as a whole. The noises from some opposition parties against the recall might have to do with the implication this shall have in their organisations. Opposition parties have little to benefit from a strong ANC in the making and they are worried that they are poised to lose the forthcoming elections.

In recent times the ANC has applied these recall principles in a number of cases involving mayors, premiers and now the State President. We believe that this principle will go a long way in complementing representative democracy, by ensuring greater commitment to organizational mandates and policies and greater accountability - something that was not obvious under Mbeki administration. We are deeply reminded here of how the economic policy called GEAR was introduced.

Secondly, the state of paralysis in some parts of the public sector has been obvious since the ANC Polokwane Conference. Despite efforts to create a high-level "War Council" to accelerate service delivery and inclusion of the ANC Deputy President in the Cabinet, leadership at government level has not been forthcoming. This has given way to abuse of (including outright looting) of public resources. The commercial media depiction of a "lame-duck President" also contributed to this sense of paralysis, with the state limping from one crisis to another, crises that also undermine unity and cohesion within our movement.

It is in this respect that we welcome the recall of President Mbeki. Having said this, we however, wish to salute President Mbeki for his commitment and dedication to the tasks of changing our society and the state. We expect him to continue to play such a role in different capacities.

Cabinet Resignations

The resignation of some Cabinet ministers and deputy ministers with no intention of being available for re-appointment confirms what we have been saying as the union for a number of years now. Most members of



the Mbeki Cabinet acted as a faction within the ANC. Their recent actions are no different from other actions in the past, which sought to undermine the policy directives of their organization - ANC. They refused to heed the ANC call to stay put in order to pay allegiance not to the movement but to an individual. This is a factionalist behaviour that is behind what we call the "1996 Class Project". This is the project which aimed to replacing our mass-based ANC (and the Alliance it leads) as a centre of policy-decision making, with state-technocratic control for the benefit of the elite and big-business.

We want to say the following:

Throughout the history of the ANC there have always been others who sought to factionalise or divide our movement. Some decided to break away from our movement in order to weaken it. These attempts took place, for example, after the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955 and after the Morogoro Conference of 1969. But this giant movement became even stronger after these occurrences. It is expected that after Polokwane Conference of 2007, there will be others as well. But the movement will prevail because it is far bigger than individuals within and outside ANC.

A Call to public service workers to stay put

NEHAWU calls on all its members and workers in the public service not to be distracted by these developments, but focus on the tasks of serving our people. We must engage our maximum efforts to support the incoming administration in all ways we can and not listen to anyone who tries to take our eyes off the ball. In coming days and weeks the union will be communicating effectively with all our members in particular, and workers in general, to ensure that these developments are appropriately understood.

Implications of the Judge Nicholson Judgment

Various reviews and comments have been made on the Judge Nicholson judgment on ANC President Jacob Zuma case. NEHAWU joins the calls that among other things, steps should be taken to charge Maduna, Ngcuka and McCarthy for contravening the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) Act. The judgment did make inference to systematic abuse of the organs of the State, implicating Maduna and others.

Welcoming our new State President!

We warmly welcome announcement by the ANC to deploy its Deputy President, Comrade Kgalema Montlante as President of the Republic of South Africa. A new chapter is in a process of being opened, and the public service workers look forward towards working together with the leadership in government headed by President Montlante.

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