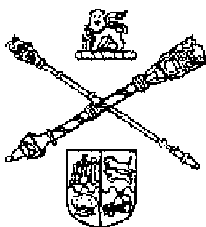


PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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18 March 2005

The Democratic Alliance

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The Honourable T. Manuel

Minister of Finance
National Assembly
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Dear Trevor,

Thank you for your letter of 10 March 2005.

There are three points you raise, that I would like to address.

First, I am afraid you are wrong when you assert that I am “*incorrect from first principles*” in arguing that there is no “*constitutional imperative*” to achieve “*representivity*” in sport.

In fact, there is no constitutional imperative to attain “*representivity*”, a notion which means that each race group, as defined by the apartheid regime, must be represented by members of that group in proportion to their numbers in the population. This is what the ANC often describes as “*demographic representivity*”.

Not only is there no constitutional imperative to attain this state of affairs, but the notion of “*representivity*” is inherently racist and stands in stark opposition to everything that a non-racial democracy is about.

Even if you could instantly transform South Africa – to remove every last vestige of apartheid’s legacy – and no-one’s race determined their opportunities in life, there would still not necessarily be ‘representivity’ in every sport (or every other aspect of life for that matter).

The National Basketball Association in the USA, for example, is dominated by a minority – a minority that suffered past discrimination.

As I said in my last letter to you, the constitution does, however, provide for the possibility of affirmative action. The clause you quote is the relevant one. It is important to note that it says that legislative and other measures to promote equality *may* – not *must* – be taken.

As it happens, the DA supports and promotes the idea that action should be taken to give special opportunity to those who currently suffer disadvantage because of past discrimination.

This has always been our position, as you presumably know. However, we believe that redress in sport should be done through development programmes designed to help the currently disadvantaged overcome the legacy of discrimination against them and their forebears.

We do not believe redress should be done through the imposition of race quotas, because such quotas reinforce the racial ideology of apartheid, are unjust and, above all, fail to properly correct the imbalances created by apartheid.

Second, you refer to Jonty Rhodes and Fanie de Villiers, amongst others, as “*recalcitrant and change averse*” because of their opposition to transformation and quotas.

This represents a fundamental misunderstanding on your part.

South African sports men and women, black and white, oppose the idea of quotas because it undermines their sense of self worth and runs directly against the purpose of their chosen profession – the pursuit of excellence.

Certainly your implication is that those opposed to a quota system are white and racist is disingenuous. Numerous leading black sports people have spoken out against quotas.

Perhaps the most revealing of these was the recent interview with Springbok wing Breyton Paulse.

I would like to quote Paulse at length as I believe his comments go to the heart of the matter.

In an interview, carried in the Sunday Independent, Paulse said the following:

“People should not use us as tokens. It is so discriminating. It is against our integrity.

“I wasn’t ready the first time I was chosen for the South African squad and I was unhappy. I needed about three more years to get ready for it and had the feeling I was only there because of other considerations. I was very cross at the way it was implemented.

“There have definitely been players whose careers have been ruined by this. I won’t name names but they have been fast-tracked onto the scene and sadly that didn’t do them any good and they disappeared. But for my character, my spirit-base and determination, I would probably have

disappeared, too. That sort of thing makes you think and can harm you: the consequences are bad. You start to doubt yourself and negative things creep into your mind.

“People have been put in there because of their colour; and that is wrong. You can’t just put someone in. You must give the players a support structure and provide the opportunity for them to help themselves get to where they want to be.”

“This tokenism is definitely wrong and will create divisions in the team. Supporters are also fed up with it. People are not stupid; they cannot be fooled. You cannot play with reality. Obviously, after democracy, transformation was going to happen, and originally I supported it. But the manner in which it has come across has been wrong for both sides. There is a better way you can nurture people. You can’t just take them from the bottom and put them at the top. They must put themselves at the top.”

“Getting to the top obviously takes time...What is the point in trying to fast-track the process? I am sure a player only wants to be there on merit, and he will feel uncomfortable if he is just making up the numbers. No one wants to be called a Springbok under those circumstances.

“The best players of the day should be chosen, whether it is 15 black or white players. It is wrong to window-dress for the world. We need to show patience because I know that talented black players will come through.”

I wonder, what do you make of Breyton Paulse’s experience?

Paulse is not alone either. Other leading black South African players have spoken out against transformation and the effect that quotas have on one’s sense of self worth, and on the performance of the team.

Protea’s fast bowler Makhaya Ntini has said the following:

“I do not believe in mixing politics with sport and I do not see why people still see a problem today. We already all have the same opportunities. One thing I do not want is for us to be called affirmative action players. That’s bad for black players and bad for SA cricket. I want to play first and foremost with good players, the best players, in a winning team.”

Team mate and fellow fast bowler Monde Zondeki has described the situation as follows:

“I can understand where these guys who complain are coming from. When they were young they had no chance because of their colour and they are bitter. But that has all changed now. A black player with talent receives big help. And people must also understand it’s a slow process. It is important to have a team that is representative of the whole country but ultimately you want to be in a winning side.”

I assume you will agree that these players are neither ‘recalcitrant’ nor ‘change averse’.

(Also, I find it significant that you chose to ignore the views expressed by the late Steve Tshwete and Abdul Minty - which I cited in my speech and previous correspondence - and which mirror those views outlined above.)

I challenge you to produce any leading South African sports person, selected on race rather than ability, who is willing to openly state that he or she is happy with that decision - that they would rather be in a team because of their colour than because of their talent.

Third, you effectively accuse me of being a racist when you state:

“Of course there will be some, possibly including yourself, who equate blacks with mediocrity.”

I do not equate blacks – or any race – with mediocrity.

In fact, the converse is true. It is those such as yourself, who insist on race quotas, who are saying that black players are not capable of making our sides on merit.

Certainly that is how black sports players interpret being selected as a “quota player”

You will have noted the emphasis that each of the three players quoted above place on winning and the belief that their individual capability be placed ahead of their demographics.

In short, unlike you, I do not believe that merit should be cast aside in favour of race or that representivity should take precedence over equality.

Finally, I think your proposal of a public debate is an excellent one.

I am sure you will agree, however, that the state of South African sport is not an issue which affects only certain communities in this country, but rather is one felt by all South Africans.

Thus, it is my belief that the best forum for a debate is one with the widest exposure - one which would ensure that all South Africans are represented.

To this end, I will be submitting a request to Madam Speaker, asking that a debate on transformation and the state of South African sport be scheduled in the National Assembly.

It is my sincere hope that the request will be granted and that the ruling party will allow for an equal distribution of time in the debate so that both sides can be equally represented.

Of course, I look forward to your support for and participation in such a debate.

In the interim, I look forward to your response, to the issues I have addressed above.

Sincerely,

Donald Lee MP

DA spokesperson on sport and recreation