

Politics & Society

Songs, hand signs expose delegates' preferences

SETUMO STONE and KARL GERNETZKY

RIVAL camps in the African National Congress (ANC) leadership succession race taunted each other with songs and hand signals yesterday, exposing underlying divisions that the party seeks to keep out of the open until nominations are opened in October.

The war of songs between supporters of President Jacob Zuma and his deputy Kgalema Motlanthe indicates the party was not firmly in control of its members, despite emphasis on discipline since Mr Zuma came to power in 2007.

Yesterday a group of delegates largely led by KwaZulu-Natal branches sang pro-Zuma songs, while a smaller group from the North West retaliated by singing North-Motlanthe songs.

The skirmish was contrary to the conference's code of conduct which reads: "delegates must refrain from any behaviour or action which would bring the ANC into disrepute. This provision includes the singing of derogatory songs against a comrade, leader, alliance partners or guests".

But the ANC's head of policy, Jeff Radebe, said yesterday there were no Zuma or Motlanthe supporters in the ANC. "People were singing in support of the ANC."

One of the pro-Zuma songs runs: "We go with Zuma, we go with the president." Their opponents sang: "Welcome Motlanthe, go away Zuma." The "peace" and "substitution" hand gestures used in both songs are not symbols sanctioned by the ANC.

Mr Zuma enjoys widespread support in KwaZulu-Natal, which has brought the most delegates to the conference. A delegate from North West was later overheard saying KwaZulu-Natal's support for Mr Zuma was "tribalist".

Top party officials have maintained that the conference was concerned only with finding consensus on policy issues.

Policy meeting rejects wage subsidy

NATASHA MARRIAN Deputy Political Editor

THE African National Congress (ANC) last night rejected the proposed youth wage subsidy, opting instead for a "job seeker's grant" national executive committee member Paul Mashatile said yesterday.

Compulsory national service was also being looked at as an option.

ANC ally, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), has opposed the wage subsidy since it was announced by Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan in his 2011 budget speech. It appears to have made headway in its push for the subsidy to be scrapped, at the ANC policy conference in Midrand, yesterday.

Mr Mashatile said delegates felt that a system in which employers received money was open to abuse, and was "not a good mechanism to push employment".

Instead, they had endorsed the job seeker's grant proposed by President Jacob Zuma in his opening address to the meeting on Tuesday.

Mr Mashatile said the resources set aside by the government could be used to fund other mechanisms, including the grant.

The ANC has also proposed a national youth service — with the South



PUSHING A POINT: President Jacob Zuma, right, at the ANC's fourth national policy conference at Gallagher Estate in Midrand yesterday.

African National Defence Force — which "should be compulsory as far as possible". He emphasised, however, that this did not amount to conscription. Rather it was aimed at preventing "loitering" by young school leavers, and to ensure that they were skilled.

The proposals would be further fleshed out at the ANC's national conference in December.

Speaking on the sidelines of the conference, Cosatu general secretary Zwelanzima Vavi hinted at a new approach, a "comprehensive youth development strategy", formulated with input from the unions and the ANC Youth League.

The idea of the subsidy had been lauded by the Democratic Alliance (DA), which argued that it would create 400 000 jobs.

The DA and Cosatu clashed over the subsidy during a march earlier this year. Discussions around the subsidy are unfolding in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac).

Cosatu has stalled the implementation of the youth wage subsidy by the Treasury, arguing that it would "entrench slavery".

The union federation released its detailed response to the Treasury and the DA this week, outlining its vehement opposition to the subsidy. The paper, submitted to the policy conference for discussion, argues that proponents of the subsidy incorrectly assumed that wages were a major constraint to job creation.

Mr Vavi said Mr Zuma's proposed job seeker's grant sounded like an "interesting intervention", but the concept had yet to be unpacked.

"In other countries you put together a system of ensuring that people continually search for work, to present themselves for training in whatever system you have for people seeking employment opportunities, and you give them a grant to continue surviving while they look for employment. That's what it is elsewhere in the world," he said.

Young Communist League secretary Buti Manamela welcomed the

idea of a job seeker's grant, saying it would bring relief to young job seekers if endorsed by the ANC.

"What we've always been saying is that you have to reduce the cost of looking for a job, we never think about the cost involved for young people to look for a job, people getting a newspaper, getting money to travel to interviews, all those things require a cost."

In its paper opposing the youth wage subsidy, Cosatu argues that the youth wage subsidy was not a policy that emanated from the ANC, and was in fact rejected by party delegates at previous gatherings.

The federation also maintained the subsidy would bring about "substitution effects", with companies being given incentives to let go of workers in order that they employ subsidised ones.

Cosatu said the subsidy also did not guarantee skills development and training, and would entrench inequality in wages.

Cosatu president Sdumo Dlamini has said that the subsidy was typical of how the government "runs directly opposite to the ANC direction".

The federation has been critical of the Treasury for its perceived failure to implement ANC policies. marriann@bdfm.co.za

IN BRIEF

Popcru agrees with court on lax police

INSTRUCTIONS | Police union Popcru agreed with a Hillbrow magistrate who berated police yesterday in a court case on the defacing of Brett Murray's painting *The Spear* of President Jacob Zuma. Prosecutor Frederik Beukes wanted a further postponement as the absent investigating officer had not complied with any instructions. Magistrate Johan Engelbrecht said: "I have become tired of complaining about the SA Police Service and their conduct on a daily basis." Popcru spokeswoman Theto Mahlakoana said: "We can't have a situation where officers halt or slow down the delivery of justice unnecessarily." Sapa

Cleric warns on constitution

OMENS | South Africans must be vigilant against threats to the constitution, former archbishop of Cape Town Njongonkulu Ndungane said yesterday at the University of the Witwatersrand, where he was awarded an honorary doctorate of literature. "Ominous signs ... include the so-called 'secrecy bill', the SAPS Amendment Bill, the Legal Practice Bill and the Traditional Courts Bill." Sapa

ANC scuttles no-confidence bid

COUNCIL | An attempt by the Democratic Alliance (DA), Inkatha Freedom Party and National Freedom Party to pass a motion of no confidence in the mayor of Nqutu, northern KwaZulu-Natal, was foiled when police had to intervene after African National Congress cadres forcibly took opposition's seats at a council meeting, the DA said yesterday. Edward West

'Dirty linen' deal denied

ALLEGATIONS | Claims by investigative magazine *Noseweek* of kickbacks and money-laundering in a hurried deal between Independent Newspapers and Auction Alliance to ensure neither's dirty laundry was aired, were denied by both yesterday. Independent editor-in-chief Chris Whitfield criticised "absolute scurrilous journalism" and "fevered imaginings made into print." Sapa

Reserve Bank Ponzi alert

SCAMS | South Africans should take care when choosing investments that offered large returns within a short period, as many were scams, Reserve Bank spokesman Hlengani Mathebele said yesterday. Several investigations were under way in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, but it was a national problem. "Once you focus on a specific area or name, they move." Sapa

Free education 'must come soon'

POOR | Free education for the poor should become a reality sooner rather than later, Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande said yesterday. In response to a memorandum by the SA Students' Congress demanding free education, he said funding for loans and bursaries tripled from R2,3bn in 2008 to R6bn last year. Sapa

A final strategy on job creation could be long way off

IN RECENT months the argument over a youth wage subsidy has dominated discussions on economic policy and how to get young people into jobs.

The proposed R5bn youth wage subsidy was meant to come into effect in April but stalled following strong opposition by the Congress of South African Trade Unions, which says the subsidy would prejudice older workers who would be let go by firms in favour of younger and cheaper employees.

The issue was also expected to feature prominently at this week's African National Congress (ANC) policy conference. But on Tuesday, President Jacob Zuma included a reference to a job seeker's allowance

in his opening address, without giving any more details.

Later in the day, during a press conference, he said that "a country cannot live on social grants" indefinitely. This would appear to indicate that there is still a lack of clarity on which policy, if any, will actually be implemented.

On Wednesday, ANC policy head Jeff Radebe was asked what exactly was meant by a job seeker's allowance. He said such a proposal was mentioned in the ANC's discussion documents. Those documents mention the proposal, but do not spell out what it means.

For Pretoria University associate sociology professor Andries Bezuidenhout, such an allowance would "shift the focus from the

demand side of the labour market, to the supply side". He points out that the current social grant system excludes young men, and that this could be part of the motivation for such a grant. He also says, crucially, that studies in controlled environments, particularly in one small town in Namibia, have shown that "the moment people get a little bit of cash, the discouraged unemployment rate drops by 50%".

Prof Bezuidenhout also says that at the moment, people "living in households that receive social grants do tend to be the ones that actually do find work". This would be evidence against a claim that a job-seeker's allowance would encourage more welfare dependency.

But this focus on the supply side of the labour market will only encourage people to look for the

available jobs. While Investment Solutions chief strategist Chris Hart admits that such an allowance would stimulate the economy, as people would have money in their pockets, SA still lacks what he calls "an effective job-creation mechanism".

Mr Hart says this is really about creating employers, who create jobs. As he puts it: "I haven't heard anyone talking about small business, which is where the focus must be."

He suggests that the difference between SA and Brazil — which shares similar problems — is that Brazil has focused on small business and jobs have been created.

As ANC delegates grapple with growing the economy, it does appear that there is a focus on big projects, such as the government's infrastructure plan. While that would help businesses already in existence,

and stimulate local economies through the salaries paid to workers, it would not deal with the fundamental problem, which is creating new small businesses. This despite Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan stating regularly that he wants to make life easier for smaller firms.

Prior to the start of the ANC policy conference, various business organisations said what they needed to hear was certainty over policy. With that certainty would come confidence to spend the half-a-trillion-rand cash pile in their bank accounts. But it appears the debate on employment generation could actually muddy the waters still further, and that a final job-creation strategy could still be some way off.

■ Grootes is an Eyewitness News Reporter

NEWS Analysis

Stephen Grootes

SOUTH AFRICA UNLOCKS MARITIME TRAINING POTENTIAL

South Africa, through the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSAs) has joined the ranks of elite maritime countries following the acquisition of a dedicated training vessel. The launch, scheduled for the 4th of July 2012 is a pioneering initiative and is the continent's first fully operational dedicated training vessel. It is a milestone in the history of South Africa's maritime industry and will go a long way in addressing the shortage of cadet training berths being experienced globally. It is a step in catapulting South Africa to the status of a significant maritime country, it will also entrench the faith of global maritime companies in South African seafarers. It will create an environment where hundreds of young South Africans will have their skills developed to their maximum potential. Once qualified with the relevant certificate of competency they will be well placed to take up their position in the maritime world in competition with the world's best seafarers.

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