

MOIPONE
MALEFANE

TALKING LEADERSHIP

SHORTLY after his release from prison Nelson Mandela visited Tanzania where ANC members were exiled.

Among them was Godrich Gardee, now a feisty member of parliament for the EFF.

Gardee was in Mazimbu camp when Mandela came to tell them they had two flight options.

One would take them back home, the other to other countries to further their studies.

Gardee decided to join 600 other comrades to study in Nigeria.

He obtained two diplomas in accounting in Nigeria between 1990 and 1996.

"I only had matric when I went into exile. We were offered to study by the ANC for free."

He quickly points out: "Hey, my qualifications are not fake, but I have felt bad when I produced them because I get questioned."

He says the questioning of his qualifications and the Eugene Nyathi qualifications scandal in 1998 made him realise he would have a problem. (Nyathi was a highly-paid fraud in the 1990s who posed as a political analyst.)

He then enrolled for an auditing course at Tshwane University of Technology.

Gardee, who was born in Mpumalanga, has lived in Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania.

He returned to South Africa in 1996 and has held senior positions in several government departments in Mpumalanga government until he joined the EFF in 2013.

He was dismayed by the stench of corruption.

"I did not hear about corruption, I worked in corruption. Hey, leaders do not care ... they steal the money ... they steal!"

As we chat at the EFF's headquarters in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, Gardee confesses that he is stressed. In addition to his workload he is studying for an LLB with Unisa.

He served as head of department of finance at sports, legislature, public works and local government in Mpumalanga.

"I saw corruption in all these departments that I worked in."

He once refused to sign off a dodgy R300-million contract.

Those above him approved it.

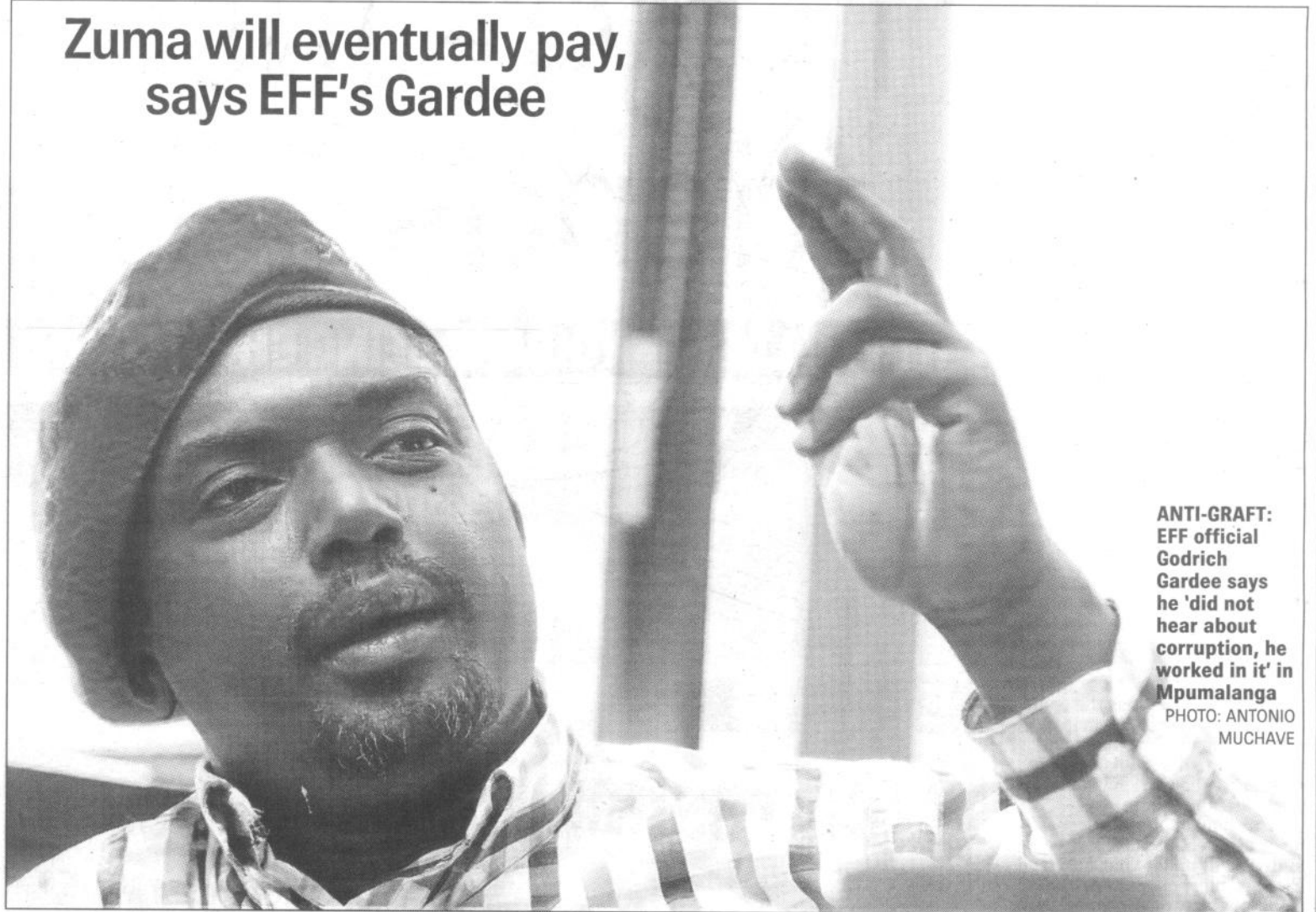
"The project was supposed to provide water to rural communities but to date there is no running water at communities that were supposed to benefit."

He also refused to make other similar suspicious payments to the tune of millions of rands, but he was overruled.

"I went to the office of the premier and informed them about

FORMER ANC EXILE UPS POLITICAL STAKES

Zuma will eventually pay, says EFF's Gardee



ANTI-GRAFT:
EFF official
Godrich
Gardee says
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PHOTO: ANTONIO
MUCHAVE

how Mr X was stealing taxpayers' money, but in three months Mr X emerged at the premier's office as his special adviser."

He recalled how he was once threatened that he would die like the late Mbombela municipality speaker Jimmy Mohlala.

Mohlala was gunned down after he blew the whistle on tender corruption linked to the construction of the Mbombela Stadium for the 2010 World Cup.

Following the threats while he was at the local government department, Gardee agreed to be moved to a new position in strategic planning and performance management in the same department.

"But I was lucky that I was approached and told to get out of people's way," says the 47-year-old

father of four.

He does not regret resigning from the ANC after recruiting several people to join the organisation. He remains friends with those he left in the ANC.

"The ANC has lost touch with its founding vision and mission that it will serve the people. The magnitude of corruption in government is bad and no one cares."

Gardee, who is yet to vacate his seat in parliament after he was elected secretary of the party, a full-time position, rejects accusations that the EFF is causing chaos in the house when members demand that questions be answered and rules be followed.

"We are engaging as equals and Parliament is not a church service ... [it is] a theatre of a struggle.

"We are doing what we told our voters that we would do.

"We told them we will hold the executive accountable and we are not in Parliament to drown with those that sleep."

He is confident that whatever the governing party does to prevent President Jacob Zuma from paying back taxpayers' money used for non-security upgrades in Nkandla, he will eventually pay.

"He will never escape his liability; we will go to the highest court... Even ANC stalwarts are saying he must pay." He was the first MP to rise on a point of order that resulted in chaos during the state of the nation address.

The biggest fight in parliament is in committees where the EFF is fighting to have some of the leg-

islature's rules changed.

He refers to colonial rules that the apartheid government used to oppress the then opposition parties.

He says according to the rules, guests of parliament who sit in the gallery are referred to as "strangers".

Speakers in the house are not allowed to read without looking or making eye contact with MPs.

"This, including the powers of the powers and privileges committee, has to change. This committee is dominated by the ANC and it is unfair to members if they are facing disciplinary hearing before it."

He claims the EFF was making headway on a lot of issues it has raised in parliament and it has the courage and determination to wait for its victory.