

EFF must tread carefully



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The EFF is vowing to keep Mkhwebane in office, despite the continued embarrassment her shoddy work brings to that office.

Given what we know about the character and nature of the ANC, not many South Africans were shocked about the recently announced Cabinet.

Yes, a collective sigh of relief followed the realisation that Bathabile Dlamini, among others, did not make it into the executive.

But don't hold your breath. Disgraced favourites within the ruling party have been known to rock up, either as heads of government institutions which take them out of the public eye, or they hit the jackpot and end up as diplomats.

Two appointments to the Cabinet should give South Africans the reassurance that President Cyril Ramaphosa is fighting the good fight that he promised.

The appointment of Patricia de Lille as minister of public works was a masterstroke by the president. Not only does it show his commitment to inclusivity, but it says to people that his crusade against corruption is not just talk, it is backed up by opening up government to scrutiny by seasoned anticorruption activists like the leader of Good. Who can forget that she was the first to bring up the arms deal corruption in parliament?

The second appointment that shows the president is his own man is that of Pravin Gordhan. Due to no fault of his own, Gordhan has become the unwilling face of the fight against state capture and corruption. He is reviled by some within his own party as tweets by ANC veteran Tony Yengeni and Ekurhuleni mayor Mzwandile Masina have shown.

Of all the ministers the president announced, Gordhan's appointment is the one

that has invoked the deepest kind of emotional responses from within the ruling party itself and from the opposition, especially the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).

And this is where it gets really interesting: those who want Gordhan gone are united across party lines. The EFF has sustained its campaign against Gordhan, but it looks like it has upped the ante and is even prepared to publicly contradict itself just to get rid of him.

When Public Protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane was appointed, EFF leader Julius Malema was on record as saying she would "collapse that office", that she is aligned to state capture masterminds the Guptas and other worse things.

But the EFF did an amazing about-turn on her, vowing to protect her to the ends of the earth. Simply because she issued a report that was not favourable to Gordhan, their nemesis. Not many are shocked by the flip-flopping by the EFF and its leadership, after all it was the same Malema who vowed once that he would "kill for Zuma", and we know how that relationship went.

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The battleground that is now Gordhan was an important one for the president to win, both within his party and outside. Had he backed down to the EFF's call to overlook Gordhan, he would have demonstrated to his detractors within the ruling party that he is spineless.

The EFF needs to be careful about turning Gordhan into another Zuma. When Pravin goes, whenever that will be, they will be found wanting in terms of solid content and their election promises.