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EDITORIALS

ANC sold illusion with land promise

You have to hand it to the ANC – even those newly co-opted to its ranks quickly take command of the doublespeak which characterises communication from the organisation.

No less a personage than Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille was at pains this week to assure worried South Africans – and, no doubt, many potential investors – that the ANC government has no intention of using the Expropriation Bill to arbitrarily seize land from private owners.

Oh really? So why did you and your colleagues in parliament vote in favour of it, then?

Recalling the pain of the past, De Lille said: “I am certain we can agree [arbitrary expropriation] is not the kind of pain and injustice that democratically elected representatives will subject South Africans to again,” she said.

Coming from a minister who has squandered taxpayers’ money on a useless border “security fence” with Zimbabwe, this is hardly the sort of stuff you can take to your bank. Speaking of which, now that expropriation without compensation is entirely at the whim of ANC apparatchiks, we wonder how banks will view property as collateral for loans, with bond holders at of risk being deprived of that property...

De Lille is correct that land is an emotive issue and that people who were forcibly evicted from their land during the years of apartheid want some redress.

Yet, those angry and psychologically damaged South Africans have been sold the illusion that, once they have land, the milk and honey will automatically follow. They won’t. The ANC knows that but is cynically continuing anyway.

And, if the ANC doesn’t produce some high-profile land seizures from the “colonists”, the deprived will get angry.

Surely, some would say, the ANC would not cut off its nose to spite its face? Its track record doesn’t look good on that score.