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LOVE THY LABOUR



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Jobs for disabled plan is a farce

AT A recent meeting held by the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour, the Department of Employment and Labour reported that they had estimated a cost of R250 000 was required to create a new job.

They said that they had spent a much lesser amount on preserving jobs in that they spent R20 million to preserve 965 jobs.

If you went to any small business in South Africa and asked them what it cost to create a new job, they would look at you askance and quite categorically tell you that the cost of creating a new job is nil.

A business small or large, will only embark upon the new job if it's going to create profit for that employer. This anecdotal story tells us how wrong the current South African government has gone.

Another twist in the tale is that our ANC government refers to "job opportunities" as opposed to jobs. A job opportunity could mean anything. Invariably it means a job for a few days or a few months. It very seldom means a sustainable productive position.

In other words, when government tells us that they want to create two million job opportunities they are telling us that it could be anything from a short-term position in the extended public works programme or a curtailed contract in some unproductive scheme.

Even in the entity, which falls within the Department of Employment and Labour, supported employment enterprise, we see enormous wastage and a nightmare. It has been reported on the annual performance of the supported enterprise for 2024/2025 that they have created during that year, 150 employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

In other words, almost nothing. The census has revealed that about 6% of our population (if not more) come from the disabled community. If this is the case, the 150 employment opportunities for persons with disabilities is almost laughable. To spend millions of rand on this is a crying shame.

These supported employment enterprises employ a full staff complement and spend enormous money in finally entering into customer agreements with no more than five customers by the end of March 2024.

We see that these factories have been granted R184 million from the National Treasury and are hoping to earn R68 million. In other words, the businesses have been set up specifically to create a loss.

What is almost unbelievable is that the management of the SEEs (Supported Employment Enterprise) have lamented the fact that they don't have enough money from the fiscus.

There are dozens if not hundreds of welfare institutions in South Africa that run their workshops and assisted employment factories etc. It would be a lot more functional and productive to take some of the SEE money and sponsor these welfare institutions.

The welfare institutions have proved that they can run assisted employment for their recipients at a very small fraction of the projected costs for the SEEs. When first established, it was a good idea to have supported employment enterprises but the way it has been run into the ground is now completely unsustainable.

We are spending hundreds of millions of rand with the entire footprint of all the SEEs is less than 1 300 people. Is it not about time we handed over the entire enterprise to various welfare organisations in South Africa?

Michael Bagraim is a veteran labour lawyer, and a Democratic Alliance MP