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## Bill Gould Insight

### DA ministers outshining ANC counterparts likely causing discomfort

John Steenhuisen's January 25 letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa, reported in his January 26 Politicsweb article *DA declares formal GNU dispute over Expropriation Bill and NHI* is tantamount to an ultimatum that the ANC respects both the spirit and the letter of the statement of intent that both parties signed in the aftermath of the May 2024 elections.

For the first time in 30 years the ANC failed to achieve an overall majority nationally.

This was a novel experience for the ANC and one which the party did not receive comfortably.

Indeed one suspects that many of its members are still smarting over this result, while simultaneously failing to comprehend that by not achieving more than a 50% result, it is no longer solely in charge but must work with others to fulfil the government's objective of ruling the country for the benefit of all its citizens.

Not surprisingly, this has stretched the capacity of many of the ANC MPs, especially its cabinet members, to understand that they can no longer operate as though it is "business as usual" but that they must operate in conjunction with

coalition partners with whom many of them are likely most uncomfortable.

This same distaste for their previous bitter opponents does not seem to be as evident in those in the DA who have become ministers and deputy ministers — notably Leon Schreiber (home affairs), Dean Macpherson (public works) and Ashor Sarupen (finance deputy).

This is apparent from the remarkable turnaround evidenced in home affairs, especially reducing the backlog in processing visa applications, in public works by responsibly managing public buildings including addressing the former extravagance lavished on ministerial residences, and in the responsible restraint in the midterm budget occasioned by someone with financial expertise.

That Ramaphosa has deliberately flouted the GNU statement of intent with his handling of the Bela Act, the Expropriation Act and, in prospect, the NHI Act, as well as declaring earlier in January that "the ANC is still in charge" raises the obvious question about his motive in trying to be a hornet seeking to destroy the GNU



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nest. Does he no longer feel comfortable within the GNU, or is the progressive opposition of the EFF and MKP getting under his skin, while the populist tendencies of Panyaza Lesufi, the Gauteng premier, threatening to dislodge him if the notion of his being a person of little action and consequence becomes widespread?

Is it that these latter irritations are tempting him to show that he is decisive by abusing the one party, the DA, which has committed to keeping him in power provided he abides by the GNU's statement of intent?

Tempting as it might be to

accept these explanations as sufficient to account for his apparently erratic behaviour, there is a much stronger, and potentially more devastating reason, because of its affect on the ANC, to explain all these shenanigans.

And that is the behaviour of the DA, because by being part of the GNU and taking up various cabinet positions, the DA has been given some of the reins of power including the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many South Africans — which means voters.

An obvious example is in home affairs with several significant advances in the services

provided to ordinary SA residents, including such basic improvements as reduced wait times, increased accessibility and improved document integrity.

These all result from such basics as increased staffing, digital transformation, technological upgrades and policy reforms as well as strategic partnerships in which collaborations with third parties, such as major banks and shopping centres, have expanded the department's footprint and made services more accessible.

While these might be low-hanging fruit and easy wins, it begs the question why weren't these issues addressed during the term of the previous government?

It is to Schreiber's credit that he hit the ground running and was able to ensure such impressive improvements during the second half of 2024.

Another example is the big improvements in the department of public works and infrastructure, which include enhanced project delivery such as the Redevelopment of Ports of Entry Project, as well as increased funding and improved co-ordination to support the viability of national priority in-

frastructure projects — through digital transformations and policy reforms.

It would not surprise at all if this conspicuous success of the DA ministers has been drawn to Ramaphosa's attention, possibly leading to consternation on his part.

He might well regard it as outrageous that his GNU partner's ministers are outshining those of the ANC.

While not an enormous mountain to climb, we are all well aware the DA governs better than the ANC wherever it has had the opportunity, most notably in Cape Town and the Western Cape.

It does create an embarrassment for the ANC that it will have to satisfactorily explain — which might be an impossible mission — to voters in 2029.

In the meantime, voters will have had five years of the DA's superior performance on which to judge who they want to have more of.

Based on these scenarios and this analysis, it is not difficult to imagine that the DA could easily be the majority party in any post-2029 GNU, if not enjoying a majority nationally.

*Bill Gould is a social commentator and writes in his own capacity*