



African People's Convention

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NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT LAWS AMENDMENT BILL DEBATE

by

Comrade Themba Godi

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Chairperson, Comrades and Honourable Members.

The APC supports this Amendment Bill.

It is a truism that the modern economy, with all its progressive impact on humanity; has a down side – its sometimes negative impact on the environment.

The challenge on sustainable development; prevention of environmental degradation through waste and pollution do require stringent legislative instruments.

The quest for profits has sometimes over-ridden the need to protect the environment and human settlements.

We have seen companies polluting water and the atmosphere, the dumping of hazardous waste to the detriment of people; animals; aqueous life etc. We have seen companies ignore repeated warnings or directives to stop pollution. There could therefore have been no better justification for strengthening the law.

We support the Bill for creating a comprehensive legislative mandate for Environmental Management Inspectors (EMI), which will allow them to enforce the so-called “brown” issues, that is waste and pollution.

We believe that with the clarification of the status of the EMI as peace officers, the law will be vigorously implemented, leading to the arrests of environmental terrorists.

We do not believe that it was correct to curb the penalty for non-compliance. It would have been correct to put a minimum penalty. This has the potential of having penalties that are no more than just a slap on the wrist. This aspect is clearly a concession to big business at the expense of the poor. Anyway, what is new?

The objective of a penalty is to serve as a deterrent. What is proposed here might definitely not be sufficient; if the example of one infamous company called Tiger Brands is anything to go by.

Comrade Minister, beside our serious concern about the clauses on penalties, we are happy with the Bill. We however, wish to say that a few issues need consideration or clarification, viz.: the type of training that the EMI's will undergo and where? The numbers that will be employed and whether those are considered sufficient?

Once people are employed, there is the issue of ensuring their effectiveness, the evaluation mechanisms. How will these be done or have these been considered?

Thanks.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. H. ...", located below the "Thanks." text.