

The General Secretary  
Congress of the People  
Congress House  
Braamfontein  
JHB

7<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Dear General Secretary

**MY RESIGNATION FROM COPE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

The advent of COPE and its supposed principles of integrity, inclusivity, democracy and transparency inspired millions of South Africans, including myself, to tirelessly support and grow what we thought was a real opportunity to create new promise for our nation.

I have promoted and defended COPE on public platforms for many months. It is accordingly disappointing to experience firsthand the recent responses of fellow leaders on several issues of fundamental importance to the long term viability of the party.

The events of the past weeks have convinced me that there is no serious intention amongst leadership to defend or uphold such principles. It very much appears that COPE was, in the light of recent events, little more than an alternative vehicle for the entrenchment of key individuals who now seek to further what are ANC policies and processes by any other name.

Accordingly, as a matter of conscience, I resign from the national working committee (CWC) and national executive committee (CNC). I am no longer confident that leadership is either accountable or representative of the true needs and wishes of members.

After eight months of genuine effort to further the work of the party as a member of the national executive, I am now convinced that very little appetite exists to accept, let alone rectify, the very serious challenges which face the party.

COPE promised an 'Agenda for Hope and Change for All South Africans'. It is becoming abundantly clear to me that 'Hope' is in decline, there is no 'Change' from ANC practices, and the only South Africans setting the 'Agenda' are current and former ANC members, to the exclusion of all others.

It is becoming my view that a great fraud has been perpetrated against the South African electorate and I will no longer be part of leading it. I now regard the rhetoric of 'deepening democracy' as totally baseless and regret being overwhelmed by the exciting potential this had for our country . I regret even more that I convinced others likewise.

It is no longer good enough to simply deny such challenges or denounce those who raise them. This displays utter contempt for the intelligence of the members and voters who trusted COPE to be different from the rest.

I would remind you that a large number of COPE voters and supporters have no history whatsoever with the ANC. They were promised, and believed in, a brand new party with a brand new manifesto. Sadly, this promise is spectacularly failing closer inspection in both policy and practice. For example, continual references by COPE leaders to former President Mbeki appear out of place and confusing given that he remains a committed member of the ANC.

My treatment at the hands of CWC colleagues and yourself at both CWC meetings following the public disclosure of my confidential memo has been shameful. Rather than concede that challenges exist and propose solutions, you have chosen to shoot the messenger and stifle real debate.

In the face of recent by-elections results in which the COPE vote now averages 1.8% of the poll, colleagues such as M.George, S.Ngonyama, A.Mda and others harshly attack me for raising the concerns conveyed by structures and members. I sincerely felt that it was my right and responsibility to raise issues of concern within the leadership structure.

I find it unacceptable that you, as General Secretary, instructed me to ask permission to raise such concerns with my colleagues. Again, I find it unacceptable that S.Ngonyama demands that I 'humble myself and apologise' to the leadership for expressing my thoughts. Furthermore, it is totally unacceptable that M.George suggests my actions in raising such issues are possibly a disciplinary offence!

Are these not the responses of people, so heavily steeped in ANC intolerance, that their actions become disingenuous if we profess to be a modern, democratic party? Many are proud of their association with the ANC, there is nothing wrong with that, but then we should not pretend that those traditions do not still guide us.

I stand by my opinion that COPE will remain in terminal decline if an undemocratic culture and denialism continues to prevail and dominate the discourse. All CWC members should remember that they were not elected by party members. It is precisely due to this culture of control, intolerance and indifference to the wishes of members that massive blunders have been made.

I consider the appointment of Reverend Dandala as Presidential Candidate to be a good case in point. This decision was a monumental error which has resulted in the services of this good and honest man being abused for narrow political interest. M.Lekota was publically appointed COPE President in Bloemfontein and it is an indictment on the self serving interests of some leaders that the issue of a Presidential Candidate ever came to such a destructive conclusion.

Equally, I believe it is widely accepted that the appointment of A.Boesak as Western Cape provincial premier candidate cost COPE dearly. The point is that no democratic consultation with party members occurred on these important matters. Despite his significant contribution to the struggle, he was clearly not the choice of potential COPE voters or donors.

COPE, despite its significant number of public representatives, is patently failing to engage the South African public on the bread and butter issues of the day.

Too much time is being spent on internal power struggles with very little effort being made in terms of communication and strategy. The party website, for example, has been inactive for weeks.

Further, it is regrettable that M. Shilowa has not seen fit to publically defend the President of the party or distance himself from the ongoing campaign to undermine and discredit him. The Deputy President was in Bloemfontein and fully supported the appointment of M. Lekota as party President; it is therefore inexplicable to me that he would allow such campaigns to continue. In this regard, the Deputy President carries a heavy responsibility for the instability and confusion which plagues COPE to this day.

Lobbying continues intensively with absolutely no regard to the damage and divisions this is causing at grassroots levels.

Who sets the agenda of COPE? In the case of the Western Cape, it is commonly known that James Ngculu of the ANC drafted, or assisted in drafting, the COPE provincial election strategy along with Mbulelo Nsidana, interim provincial Chairperson. How can the ANC be allowed to play any part in formulating COPE strategy? Members deserve answers to these disturbing questions.

Further, very serious questions remain unresolved despite the best efforts of many to raise them. The fundamental issue of the fraudulent manipulation of party lists goes straight to the heart of trust in leadership and the pledged zero-tolerance approach to corrupt practices. To date, and several months later than promised, there is still no evidence of any credible, detailed investigation into the matter. The reluctance of many CWC members, such as M. George, to pursue the investigation raises questions which will not simply go away if ignored for long enough.

Equally, I have seen no attempt to address the situation in which all the senior officials in the party now sit in Parliament whilst expensive COPE head offices stand empty in Braamfontein at a cost of R60,000 per month. How can the party structures grow when the National Head of Organising is occupied full-time in Parliament?

The same can be said for the Head of Policy and Head of Communications. At a time when our new party so desperately needs to build a foundation, every senior official is in Parliament. If, indeed, they are trying to fulfill both roles, then the taxpayer and voter will equally feel shortchanged.

The continuous indifference to the undemocratic practices of unelected leadership in the Provinces spells doom for the prospects of growth in our structures. Reports, petitions and letters from structures continue to go unanswered by your office. Indeed, none of those documents copied to me have ever been tabled for discussion at any leadership meeting I have attended. The members and structures are being treated with contempt by those they look to for honest and open guidance and leadership. It is a recipe for disaster.

I feel very strongly that for the above reasons, and those raised in my memo, COPE has underestimated the intelligence, goodwill and principles of party supporters and voters.

Surely enough time has passed for some of these issues to have been resolved? It is no longer good enough to claim COPE is a 'new party' with 'teething problems'.

People will forgive lack of resources or poor administration, what they will not forgive is the continued lack of honesty, backbone and will to tackle the difficult questions.

I remain an ordinary paid up member of COPE to await the day when the party recaptures its original beliefs and principles.

Like Martin Luther-King, millions of us had a dream.

Sincerely

Simon Grindrod