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### **Zondo commission – Open cards on party funding from now on, says Ramaphosa**

South Africa should view the Political Party Funding Act (PPFA) – which came into effect this month – as a saviour against political corruption on the one hand, but also apportioning the value of transparency in the funding of political parties on the other. This was the parting shot of President Cyril Ramaphosa at the end of his first day of testimony before the state capture commission on Wednesday.

He was responding to one of the first hard questions of the day, where evidence leader Advocate Paul Pretorius used the example of Bosasa, a company that survived on its lucrative set of government contracts, amounting to about R1-billion per annum, having regularly donated funds to the ANC, even setting up a campaign desk in its offices in Johannesburg.

“It did happen. It is one of the anomalous events that did happen,” Ramaphosa said.

“What is prominent in mind is to say, what do we do to prevent it from happening ... on the one hand the PPFA is going to be our saviour, on the other hand we should also say that if, for instance, a company donates money to a political party, and it so happens that in some way it does business with government, but that funding is not being given to the political party in return for getting contracts and all that, I would say when it happens openly and transparently, then there should not be any problems. If you’re going to give money, and you know that it is going to be transparent even if you’ve won a contract, the transparency itself will be such that it will alert the public that you should not be seeking favours.”

Such was the nature of Ramaphosa’s answers to questions by Pretorius, long and ambiguous, without detail and specific account for wrongdoing in the party.

He spent most of the day defending the principles that govern the ANC’s cadre deployment policy and its processes, saying that it was set up to ensure transformation in the public service. It continues to be relevant today because that transformation goal has not yet been fully achieved. Ramaphosa said the public service that the ANC took over in 1994 was predominantly white, with a disproportionate number of males in senior positions. His party sought to change that, given that it needed to develop resources for the majority of the country’s people.

“Today, we continue to need that type of intervention because what we are seeking to do is to build a diverse nation. A nation that is united across the various cultures that we have in our country. But also gender. Transformation is not a one-day affair. It does not happen all at one go, it is a process that happens over time, and it does need to be guided, it does need strategic intent.”

Each time the deployment committee – chaired by the ANC’s deputy president – meets, he added, it looks at the diversity element of deployment. “You therefore need the deployment committee because it’s part of our transformation process.”

But there have been appointments over the past decade or so, according to evidence the commission has so far heard, said Pretorius, that have not yielded the positive results that the ANC must have sought. He named leaders of state-owned entities who have been implicated in state capture at the commission.

Ramaphosa responded: “It is quite a broad sweep, because each one needs to be looked at in its own merit. You would find that a number of those never even featured in the deployment committee ... let’s accept that some of those deployments were done in a particular era, and in a particular way. Right now we’re able to look at it and say we actually need to do things differently. Move away from those types of deployments. They ended up being, some of them, deployments that were not fit for purpose.”

The next question from Pretorius was more direct – he asked if Ramaphosa was aware of the pattern of appointments, which seem to have been done by or with the influence of former president Jacob Zuma, and were fit for another purpose with an ulterior and illegitimate purpose.

“As I said in my statement, some of these state capture issues became only evident in time as we moved, that is why I even referred to the statement by comrade Fikile Mbalula for purposes of the type of evidence I’m giving now here, when he mentioned in an NEC meeting how he came to know about his appointment [as sports minister in 2010]. Even at that time we were not alive to the fact that there was state capture and there was something probably wrong going on.

“So some of these appointments would have happened in that course of time, and one – with hindsight – became aware that there was a common thread and if you join the dots you’ll find that there was something that was amiss that was really happening.”

Ramaphosa is scheduled to continue his testimony on Thursday.

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