

**Debate on Vote 1: The Presidency**  
**Contribution by**  
**The Hon. Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi MP**  
**President of the Inkatha Freedom Party**

National Assembly: 26 May 2015

His Excellency the President of South Africa; Honourable Speaker; Honourable Members -

We are called on today to debate a budget of some R1.2 billion and to make a judgement on the fact that the bulk of it is consumed by salaries, travel and subsistence; more is spent on International Marketing than on National Planning; expenditure on consultants is rising; and the National Youth Development Agency is the beneficiary of budget cuts.

In reality, though, we have only two options: we can rubberstamp this budget, or we can ask the President questions he is not in a position to answer. The IFP is unwilling to do either.

Eight years ago, Honourable Speaker, I proposed the 18th Constitutional Amendment Bill which sought to separate the Head of State from the Head of Government, giving us both a President and a Prime Minister.

It was not about present or future incumbents in the Presidency, but about the dignity of the office of the President and the strengthening of our constitutional system.

Most established democracies are based on a parliamentary, rather than an executive system, in which the day-to-day activity of government is left to a Prime Minister; while the President remains above reproach.

In our system, our Head of State is also Head of Government, with final responsibility for all actions of government. When government is attacked or criticized, he is responsible. When people strike, they protest against the President himself. Thus the dignity of the President is undermined, and our constitutional system weakened.

Our President should operate above politics, as an umpire, not a player, while representing the entire country in the international arena.

Tragically, my proposal died in the graveyard of the Review Committee, like countless others before it, for the late Hon. Dr Oriani-Ambrosini had not yet won his fight in the Constitutional Court for our right as MPs to table legislation.

I realise that it may have been difficult for my colleagues across the aisle to welcome a proposal from the leader of their oldest opposition, despite it being a proposal to protect our President. But the fact is, I respect the office of the President and its role in the wellbeing of our State.

I therefore ask my colleagues in this House to take on good faith another proposal that I have made time and time again to protect our President.

In this case, I seek to protect the President from the embarrassment of being made to account before Parliament for matters related to his department, for which he is not answerable. His Director General, as the Accounting Officer, carries this responsibility. But because Parliament refuses to allow this budget to be scrutinised in an oversight committee, the President is again called to account.

The IFP has formally raised this with the Rules Committee. Yet the ruling party is adamantly against digressing from the routine of embarrassing the President. I wonder where else in the world the opposition fights this hard to protect the President from the obstinacy of his own party.