



## **THE CAUSES THAT POLITICIANS FIGHT FOR ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE OFFICES THEY HOLD**



By: Dr G Bekele – London, 7 November 2009



*May our Leaders be guided by wisdom*

**Ethiopian Opposition Leaders Face Difficult Decisions In The Days Ahead,  
We Pray That God Guides Their Thoughts, Words, Strategies And Their Orders With Great Wisdom.**

Politics is Political Scientists say, about people. After all, democracy is defined as “Government of the people by the people and for the people”. But then, among the people, a peculiar form of leadership always emerges. There are great leaders who are naturally charismatic, epitome of great grassroots politicians, humanists, cool-headed, honest, painstaking and intelligent who are dedicated to the great causes of downtrodden masses. These are leaders who are to be reckoned with owing to the history of faithfulness to the causes of their people. Equally, there are nasty and power hungry creatures too like Meles who terrorize their people and betray their country. Although William Shakespeare opines that there is no art to find the mind construction on the face, which as a matter of fact is a reflection of human complexity. Our politicians must create a democratic government that believes by the strength of our common endeavors to achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create each of us the means to realize our true potential and for all of us a harmonious and united community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the very many not the few, where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe, and where we live together, freely in spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect. Our beliefs in social justice have to be true to the beliefs of our own forefathers and ancestors.

Ethiopia’s true and future democrats and or good politicians should only exist to build and safeguard a fairer, totally free and an open society, in which they all seek to balance the fundamental values of our liberty, justice, freedom, equality, peace and harmony in Ethiopian communities in which no-one at all shall ever be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity. They must champion the freedom, dignity and well being of all individuals. They should acknowledge and respect their citizen’s rights to total freedom of conscience and the right to develop their talents to the full. They must strive to aim to disperse power, to foster diversity and to nurture creativity. They must believe that the role of the state is to enable all citizens to attain these ideals, to contribute fully to their communities and to take part all the decisions, which affect their lives. Furthermore, in an honest and chivalrous way too, they must look forward to the divided Ethiopian community in which all people share the same basic rights, in which they live together in peace, harmony and in which their different cultures will be able to develop freely. They must believe that each generation is responsible for the fate of our country and even our planet and, by

safeguarding the balance of nature and the environment, for the long-term continuity of people's lives in all its forms. Upholding these values of individual & social justice, they must reject all prejudice & discrimination based upon race, color, religion, age, disability, sex or sexual orientation and oppose all forms of entrenched privilege and biased inequality. Recognizing that the quest for freedom and justice can never end, they must be willing to promote human rights and open government, a sustainable economy which serves a very genuine need, public services of the highest quality, international action based on a recognition of the centuries old interdependence of our country, all the world's peoples and responsible stewardship of the earth and its resources. They should also believe that people should be involved in running their own communities. From the year 2010 too, they must be determined to strengthen the democratic process and ensure that there is a just and representative system of government with effective Parliamentary institutions, freedom of press, information, decisions taken at the lowest practicable level and a fair voting system for all the elections.

They must at all times, defend the right to speak, worship, write, associate and vote freely, and they must protect the right of citizens to enjoy privacy in their own lives and homes. They must believe that sovereignty rests with the people and that authority in a democracy derives from the people. Above all, they should acknowledge their right to determine the form of government best suited to their people's needs and commit themselves to the promotion of a democratic federal framework within which as much power as feasible is exercised by the nations and regions of Ethiopia. Similarly, they must commit themselves to the promotion of a flourishing system of democratic local government in which decisions are taken and services delivered at the most local level, which is viable. They must foster a strong and sustainable economy which encourages the necessary wealth creating processes, develops and uses the skills of the people and works to the benefit of all, with a just distribution of the rewards of success. The people of Ethiopia are very eager to see real democracy, participation and the co-operative principle in industry and commerce within a competitive environment in which the state allows the market to operate fully and freely where possible but intervenes where necessary and not trade. All Democrats will have to promote scientific research and innovation and harness technological change to human advantage. Politicians will have to work for a sense of partnership and community in all areas of citizen's lives. They will have to recognize that the independence of individuals is safeguarded by their personal ownership of property, but that the market alone does not distribute wealth or income fairly. They will have to support the widest possible distribution of wealth and promote the rights of all our citizens to social provision and different cultural activities. They must seek to make public services responsive to the people they serve, to encourage variety and innovation within them and to make them always available on fair equal terms to all. Furthermore, their responsibility for justice & liberty cannot be confined by national boundaries.

The Ethiopian politicians, forget the EPRDF, but the Opposition leaders, have to be committed to fight corruption, poverty, oppression, hunger, ignorance, disease and aggression wherever they occur and to promote the free movement of ideas, people, goods & all services. Setting aside national sovereignty when necessary, they will have to work hard with other countries towards an equitable & peaceful international order and a durable system of common security. Within the World Community, they must affirm the values of federalism and integration and work for unity based on these principles. Such democrats and their future democratic government will have to contribute to the process of world peace, the elimination of world poverty and the collective safeguarding of democracy too by intelligently playing a full and

constructive role in international organizations, which share similar aims and objectives. These have to be the conditions of liberty and social justice, which also are the full responsibility of each citizen and the duty of the democratic state to protect and enlarge. Ethiopian rulers should never be chosen for their superior abilities and not because of their wealth or birth too? And those democratically elected by the people for the people must never use EPRDF's and those of Colonialist Style divide and rule methods as well. Ethiopian Democrats must always consist of patriotic men and women, who are able and willing to working together for all the oppressed poor citizens and well-to-do Ethiopians, the achievement of these aims and our beloved country Ethiopia. Therefore, let us strive to establish a democratic and just society once and for all, so that where that historical brotherhood of Ethiopians could be strengthened, not weakened. Democracy is a kind of a good legal contract between the governed people and the democratically elected governors. Yes, the patriotic Ethiopian people are a living testimony to the trouble their country is in. Ethiopian opposition forces also say that the country is in a crisis. Meles Zenawi knows that he is in a sinking ship. So, everyone is in agreement that Ethiopia is in deep trouble. Therefore, from now on, it is better if we find the solutions rather than dwelling on the problems.

As now clearly proved, a one party dictatorial system like the EPRDF cannot solve Ethiopia's multifarious problems. But this doesn't mean another party can find a solution to the problems either when it assumes power. They are very difficult to grapple with, for opposition parties, however determined or resourceful they may become. The alternative, thus, is to stop fighting for personal positions and tackle Ethiopia's problems in unison, to deliberate and conduct dialogues so that, from among the various solutions proposed, the best course can be charted to steer the country on the right path. When I suggest that the policies and laws aimed at addressing Ethiopia's problems should be formulated through joint deliberations, the EPRDF may argue that it has already organized meetings of various segments of the society and civil servants on different issues but those were only to impose rules and expand their power base. But this isn't what I mean by deliberation or dialogue. I am not at all referring to discussions to drum up support for biased and illegal documents written by government officials and which, beforehand, had been branded final by those who matter nor to 'deliberations' where the drafters of the documents and the moderators of their discussions happen to be one and the same and try to steer the discussions only in the direction they had in mind.

By deliberation, I mean to say, a very genuine discussion where goodwill, a sense of responsibility and trust prevail and where priority is accorded to national and public interest so that the best solutions fitting our peculiar problems are sought and implemented. It's also common to observe good leaders with goodwill whose countries are in a bad crisis situation to declare that their party cannot on its own overcome the problems and that they are willing to set aside their differences with other political parties to work jointly to find solutions to them. They set up an expert body fully interested in such a task; alternative proposals, with all their partisan party persuasions, are fully examined, weighed, selected and finally promulgated for action. This way solution can be found for national problems. It's by adopting such an open approach that a viable alternative can be secured for both the nation and the EPRDF itself. But for this to happen first the EPRDF must do something important, acknowledge that it has failed to provide the required leadership in order to govern the country. But if it doesn't have the courage to do so, it should bear in mind that it is headed for another round of failure & downfall.

If all were well at the top, how do they explain the entire muddle they put the country and themselves in now? And why did they ban a free press, imprison journalists and suspend Internet websites sites too, if there was a democracy? As wise men say: "Politicians who complain about the media are like ship's captains who complain about the big sea". The EPRDF should not therefore delude itself into believing that its political system and the recent reorganization from a Front of various ethnic parties to a Union of such parties is the start of an embarkation on a different path and of a new brand of leadership it had been following for about 19 years. These measures seems to be a ploy to bolster its very ugly ethnic and racist structuring, which has lost support and whose foundation is being eroded, by another tack which essentially does not presuppose a fundamental ideological or political change. The recent drama of government officials on the fake Code of Conduct & illegal measures that was taken against EFJA, the free press journalists, Ginbot 7 leaders and their imprisoned supporters has been the subject of criticisms by the public and world community. It has created the impression that the EPRDF suffer not only a leadership but also a personality crisis. But we want them to bear in mind what Aristotle had said to Plato: 'Plato is dear to me, but the truth is dearer'. This should make them reflect more deeply on the fate of the country. In conclusion too, just as the EPRDF and government officials have reiterated that we shouldn't be unduly proud of our past history, the EPRDF itself must not be vain about its achievements as a guerrilla force; it must admit that its tenure as a civilian government is a flop and call on all concerned to do whatever is necessary to extricate our country from its past & present misery.

In my opinion too, foolishly seeking a short cut to evade such a responsibility will ultimately end in abject failures. EPRDF's tinkering at the edges cannot improve a totally flawed system too. It is not surprising then that politics at the top drives some people mad. It makes different people mad in different ways too. Some lose their sense of self and reality, becoming just an endless succession of surfaces, smiling and glossy, with no real human core left. Others become hateful, ruthless, reckless, too rude and very angry, treating people around them as malfunctioning machines and sick domestic pets. Others take to the poisonous briefings and the maneuverings with a relish that really requires a good psychiatrist. And let us not forget those eaten up by disappointment and resentment, which find that they don't really ever recover at all from the mayhem and the madness. Most male politicians and in particular Ministers of our country today appear to have drunk a lethal cocktail of incompetence, arrogance, and dishonesty that inflates them and does untold harm to the country. They come to office and most of the times by partialities with a mania for 'initiatives' without understanding the consequences. What they never change, sadly, is the bad, old and rotten chauvinistic adherence to the centralized bureaucratic state that is at the top roof of so many problems. There are at least three kinds of Ministers in any government. The first and most numerous, are rabbits, who live in a state of funk. The second are time-savers, who make no trouble, but achieve nothing significant. The third and rarest breeds are those who join a government to get most things done. We Ethiopians need of course, the foremost of that rare breed the last kind of the conviction politicians.

The Ethiopian Prime Misery Meles Zenawi acts increasingly like a cornered rodent snarling at the media for the failing of himself, his appeasers and his colleagues. These so-called ministers & all their blinded cadres always champion 'centralism against localism, uniformity above diversity, control instead of innovation and above all bureaucracy rather than democracy. Therefore, all opposition political parties and future government must draw up good policies designed to "set the people free" from central government control. "Localism" is the buzzword. I think that there are

very good reasons why politics is moving towards the local. People realized that the world has now changed: there are bigger global forces now that affect their lives. That produces a growing sense of insecurity, and people make comfort in what they know-they-shelter in their own local. "Solidarity is no one way street". If there is to be peace, freedom and development in our society, we have to reconcile our past disagreements and differences, compromise and work together so that every young person, (girls and boys), get their chances to take a decent job that they dreamt of at school. This time we have to make abundantly clear to the public that, now everything is right and just for the oppressed nation.

In the 1940s, people voted for governments to take control of the nation and its affairs. Nowadays, because great global factors are in play, people feel less certain about the role of the nation state, the role of national government, and increasingly, they are taking refuge in their community. At the same time, voters are also more demanding of the public services. This is because we now live in a different world. At the end of the Second World War, 'take-it-or-leave-it' service was a huge leap forward but that is not how people want to have their services today. People quite reasonably expect much more responsive services, and that requires the creation of good services that belongs to the people who use them and the people who also fund them through taxes and other contributions. In the process too, our politicians need to set up the right balances between national standards of local control and, having put the standards in place, the pendulum has now got to swing decisively to the local. Hence the starting point is that the public services don't belong to the politicians-they belong to the people who use them and the people who kindly fund them. What the politicians therefore have to do is, to find a good way of bridging the democratic deficit that has been allowed to grow up between the public services and also the communities that they serve.

Then we will get public services that are better in tune with the needs of the local communities, that, in my view, have to run alongside giving individuals greater choices of democratic systems. However, they must be very careful when giving power to the locals that they do not create differences and inequalities. Because different communities have got different needs. Uniformity of provision cannot guarantee equality of outcome. We have to treat elderly politicians and people in exile too and those who loyally served their country in all areas and fields with decency and dignity in the past and make room for their participation while some remained as sharp-minded today as ever they were before. It would therefore be a wanton waste of their experience and their expertise to not involve them in future Ethiopian governments simply because they are in exile or old. It would also be extremely insulting to all the country's elders & exiled people to suggest that, when they have past a certain age or in exile, they should no longer be allowed a say in the running of their country. We don't have to create mechanism of you either die or take leave of absence for retirement. "Age is only a number". The number of female parliamentarians must be increased too? We must believe that we can really improve all the above, prevent hostilities & then do something about them. Trust me folks, it would certainly work for good. Progressive politics demands a mixture of optimism and realism. Without realism we would never be able to engage with the world as it actually is, in order to build our country. Allow too much imbalance between the two and we either undervalue our potential to imagine what might be or undermine our ability to improve what already exists. Keeping the two equilibrium together, my entire politically conscious lifetime has also meant lowering standards to maintain a sense of perspective. Un-sustained by the prospect of victory, optimism becomes more than wishful thinking and realism curdles into defeatism. Nevertheless, we will

have to always take the side of our brave men and women who advocate human rights and democratic values.

We will have to promote moderation, tolerance and the non-negotiable demands of human dignity—the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, and respect for our women, private property, free speech and equal justice. Every Ethiopian have now faced a choice between lawful democratic changes and dictatorial chaotic violence; between joyless conformity and an open, creative society; and between celebration of death in war, murder and the defense of life and its dignity through peace and democracy. We must be committed to defending our society. I believe that freedom and respect for human rights are owed to every human being now and in the future. I believe too, that deliberate murder of innocent civilians and the oppression of our citizens are everywhere still and are totally wrong and evil. Hence we must all refuse to appease the aggression and brutality of EPRDF evil men and women. Finally, “The greatest tool in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed” like us, argued the late South African black consciousness activist, Mr. Steve Biko. For us, Ethiopians, losing has become a habit; being in a minority has become a mindset. Therefore, I strongly believe, that it is natural for men & women of mother Ethiopia, to want freedom, health, wealth and happiness for their families and themselves. Hence politicians of these desperate times need temporary & long-term measures to achieve these for the oppressed nation, fulfill the noble and just causes they fight for. That by good nature, hard work, natural talent and diversity, Ethiopia is home to a great people, cradle of civilization and mankind with a noble past and exciting future. Politicians get up & unite to beat evil forces and free Ethiopia from its enemies to make the future yours and ours!!

**NB.** What was really true in our political circumstances nearly six years ago when I wrote part of this article that still glued into many peoples' mind and even websites like Professor Tekola Hagos's it continues to be relevant to our political circumstances to date? Thus, it is particularly relevant since engineer Hailu Shawel, Lidetu Kihdetu and Ayele Chamisso's betrayals to once more remind the emerging legitimate political opposition organizations' development, such as the new Medrek and Ginbot 7 alike to review their strategies. It is in the best interest of the People of Ethiopia that political organizations and civic associations present a unified opposition and in solidarity with the Medrek Group from now on, against the treasonous EPRDF Leadership in power and the political organizations that are the individual members of the EPRDF like the fake OPDO and puppets like EDP, CUD and now AEUP. [Reposted November 12, 2009, originally (part of) article posted on Feb. 29, 2004]. END.

**Genuine comments from Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia are very much appreciated at:  
[teferi\\_7@hotmail.com](mailto:teferi_7@hotmail.com)**