

# Free Education. Free Land. Free Weed.

In the good ole days before refrigeration – when we still used charcoal or kerosene fridges – they used to call it “pork barrel politics”. Because you salted pork, instead of cooling it - and stored it in a barrel. And when they went out electioneering, instead of brown paper bags containing cash, they handed out salted pork. To buy votes.

The Dagga Party is the fifteenth party to register, I believe. It got under the wire at the eleventh hour. Some party manifestos call for free education. Others call for free land. Now we have a new one – free weed!

What’s in a name? Well a look at fifteen party names is very telling...

“Freedom” appears more than any other word - in four party names: Inkatha Freedom Party, National Freedom Party, Economic Freedom Fighters and Freedom Front. But is that what they meant by “free”? It seems that this ideal is shared by right (FF), centre (IFP) and left (EFF). With fifteen parties on the go, we need to start looking for some commonalities.

Vasily Grossman wrote that “Freedom is the exact opposite of necessity, freedom is necessity overcome”. There you go. How’s that for a party platform? It is a bit reminiscent of the anthem of the Civil Rights movement in the USA – “*We Shall Overcome*”.

“Democratic” in the next most cherished term – Democratic Alliance (DA), Africa Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) and Africa Democratic Change (ADEC). Unless ADEC went the way of Makhosi Khoza? I lost track.

“Africa” also scores thrice – ANC, ADEC and ACM. It is tied for second place.

I think that “Congress” in in third place? African National Congress and Congress of the People. The meaning is very significant. *Indaba*. Palaver. Speaking of French, its verb “to talk” is “*parler*”. From whence comes “Parliament”. From those good ole days when the Normans ruled England and forced the Magna Carta on the king. An embryonic constitution.

“National” also scores twice – ANC and NFP. And so does “Movement” – UDM and ACM.

Some other very political words only get one hit – Inkatha (IFP), Front (FF), Economic (EFF), People (COPE), Content (ACM), United (UDM),

Then you have some totally original names like GOOD, Black First Land First, Agang, and now... Dagga!

What does this analysis tell us about the affections of voters? “Freedom” tops the list. “Democratic” is tied with “African” as runner-up. That is no surprise, I guess, when 81 percent of the Electorate is categorized as “African”. As opposed to Colored (9 percent), White (8 percent) and Indian (2 percent).

But what strikes me is that this is very different from those three ideals of the French Revolution – *liberté* (freedom), *égalité* (equality) and *fraternité* (solidarity).

Aside from the fact that those accents look (and sound) so sexy, compared to the English equivalents, I sense that we in South Africa have missed something.

Four parties have “freedom” in their name – so we pushed that button.

Two parties mention “economic freedom” and “African content” so we touched equality too, albeit lightly. Maybe the word “congress” has some equality built into it as well? Anyone and everyone can speak, in congress.

But *fraternité*? Fraternity, solidarity, brotherhood. “Black first” doesn’t have the ring of either equality or fraternity. It is impetuous, on the edge of gaslighting.

EFF and BLF rhetoric have been anything but “fraternal” – like Malema saying that the EFF will force out Mayor Athol Trollip “because he is white”.

Expropriating land without compensation is on the edge of violating the property rights of some citizens. Depending on HOW that is done. Although “equality” is the legitimate force driving Land Reform.

I get dizzy thinking about fifteen parties. And it’s not the free weed! It’s the volumes. I need to focus so that I can hear what is distinctive about each. Here are a few samples:

IFP wants to bring back the death penalty to achieve law and order.

COPE wants to move away from the Proportional Representation system, to a “constituency-based” system.

EFF wants something like a Year of Jubilee – to level the playing field (or is it the farmer’s field?).

DA stands for clean and capable government – it might drop affirmative action (i.e. BEE).

The ANC is still waffling – the Finance Minister asks why we should not privatize our SOEs, and the Deputy President responds that he laughs at the FM when he asks that question.

GOOD is probably the most committed to gender parity (not to fraternity, but to sorority!)

But what’s the hurry? We still have two months to go and by the time Election day rolls around, we should have a better idea of what is on the menu. I mean the ballot.

Let's hope that the Dagga Party keeps to handing out salted pork!