

Modernizing the Botswana National Front: A Case for Political Marketing

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Abstract

This paper argues that the choice of a younger and more popular, Duma Boko as president of the opposition Botswana National Front in 2010 was a good move for the party. However, this is not enough. The party needs to take a further step and revolutionize its policies and rhetoric. A comparison is made between the BNF and the Labour Party in the United Kingdom. Both parties have a history of trade union support and leftist ideology. They have also faced similar challenges and the BNF can learn from Labour. It must modernize and utilize the tools of political marketing. Boko must do what Blair did with Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution which ensured that that Labour won the general elections in 1997. The argument is that communist or socialist rhetoric was relevant until the 1980s and has now run its course as a political strategy. It must be replaced with rhetoric that strikes the right chord with voters.

Introduction

The paper starts with discussion of the Labour Party, looking at its ideological foundation. It then examines internecine strife in the party and in particular the left-right feud in the party and how it paralyzed the organization. It then shows how tools of political communication, marketing in particular, were used to revive the fortunes of the party under Tony Blair. It then moves on to examine the BNF along the same lines. It demonstrates that the BNF and the Labour Party have similar history and that the former can learn from the latter to revamp its image and enhance its electoral chances. The paper argues that the BNF must shed its Marxist rhetoric and align with voter interests. This can be achieved by a revolution from a product-oriented party to a market-oriented party. The paper also argues that the voters have rejected the party over the years because of its disorganization, anachronistic rhetoric and feuding.

Labour Party Foundation

The Labour Party was formed in 1900 as a parliamentary pressure group. Then known as the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), it was not a political party in the modern sense of the word, until 1918. It had no members, but just organizations affiliated to it. Delegates to the Labour Conference on Representation at the Memorial Hall in London resolved to form an organization for everybody that would counter the Liberals and Conservatives in the House of Commons who had ignored them. This meeting was a result of several years' effort by socialists, trade unionists and workers (Labour Party online nd). Worley (2009:1) has called it a 'broad church', for the Memorial Hall meeting comprised trade unions, socialist societies, trade councils, women's associations, and professional groups. The party thus began with a working class bias and socialist rhetoric, even though it was meant to represent a multiplicity of interests (Labour Party online nd). However, Worley warns that the broad church 'cannot simply be reduced to mean "trade unionist" and "socialist", "men" and "women"; nor can it always be divided into politics of left versus right' (Worley 2009:2-3). However, it was at the Trade Union Congress (TUC) meeting in 1899 that a resolution was made to form Labour as 'a distinct Labour group in parliament' (Worley 2009:3).

Clause IV and Left v Right

From 1918, after formal re-organization as a political party, Labour adopted Clause IV in its constitution 'To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the

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most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange' (Worley 1999:1). This became a 'sacred text, a testament printed on the back of every party membership card' (Stephens 2000:89). When party leader Hugh Gaitskell tried to have it struck out after the 1959 electoral drubbing, he incurred the wrath of the left and the trade unions, causing a storm in the party (Stephens 2000). Arblaster (2000) on the hand says Gaitskell tried to have the constitution of the party revised in a manner that the clause would be marginalized or qualified.

As Worley rightly points out, throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, Labour's members have disagreed about strategy, policy and even aims of their party. There have also been, importantly for our discussion, constant clashes between the left and right of the party and occasionally leading to but mostly 'remaining a site of competing tradition and conception within the party's composite structure' (Worley 2009:1). The so-called right and left have fought each other throughout the secession history of the party, arising mainly from policy issues (ie nationalization of industries), differences on interpretation of Marxism (whether to support the communists, United States or take a third-way during the Korean War and other conflicts) and indeed personal differences between party ideologues. These ideologues have over the years written books and pamphlets stating their positions and attacking each other, just like in the BNF. The Tribune Magazine, established by Stafford Cripps (Spartacus Educational online nd) and the New Statesman magazine also became sites of debate and polemics, with some activists often identified by scholars as 'Tribunites' (Morgan 2007).

Morgan (2007) writes about another socialist divide in the Labour Party, this time involving Michael Foot and Tony Benn, hence the latter grouping came to be referred to as 'Bennites'. He calls this 'two kinds of socialism' (Morgan 2007:382). Morgan also regards them both as 'the two outstanding and charismatic exponents of left-wing socialism' (Morgan 2007:382). But the two politicians did not see eye to eye. Foot, formerly Secretary of State for Employment in the Wilson government, replaced James Callaghan as party leader until 1982 when he was replaced by Neil Kinnock. Foot led the party to a massive defeat in the 1983 general election. His leadership had seen resignation of key figures and formation of a new party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

The evening following the election on 10 June 1983, the unions decided that Foot had to go. In his place came his friend and supporter, Kinnock, who lasted until 1992. Kinnock lost two general elections and left the seat for John Smith, a Scottish lawyer. Unfortunately, Smith suffered severe heart attack that killed him in 1994. This created an opportunity for Tony Blair, who revolutionized Labour and readied it for the 1997 general election which it won with a landslide victory. However it was Kinnock who had started key changes that made the party a winning machine. In his last days, Foot had expelled five members of a dissident group within the party known as 'Militant Tendency', led by Ted Grant, who had earlier led the Revolutionary Socialist League in Liverpool in 1964 (Morgan 2007). Kinnock put his foot down in dealing with the leftists and expelled more in 1984. More importantly, he changed the outlook of the party. He replaced the red flag emblem with a much slicker rose (BBC online 2009). Other scholars speak of a 'New Left' that emerged between the 1970s and 1980s, with phrases like Bennism and Tribunism, but all geared towards renewal of the party (Wickham-Jones 2000).

New Labour's New Vision

Smith was to continue in the path of reform but the man who was more dramatic, both in opposition and government was another Foot and Kinnock supporter, and also a Scottish lawyer, Anthony Blair (mostly known as Tony). He dared to do what Gaitskell had failed to do in 1959: He tore Clause IV apart. In the words of one of the key architects of New Labour, (apart from Blair and Gordon Brown), Peter Mandelson, the idea was to modernize social democracy (Mandelson 2002). It was meant to leave no chance to a last minute Conservative Party resurgence, at it happened in the preceding elections of 1992, which Labour should have won. They introduced a comprehensive programme of

political marketing, a concept that has hardly caught up in Botswana politics. Lilleker *et al* (2000) refer to it as ‘the use of marketing tools, concepts and importantly principles within the fields of policy development, campaign and internal relations within political parties and organizations’.

It is seen as a reaction to the rise of ‘political consumerism’, whereby the electorate increasingly engages in political choice, just as they do with brands in their everyday shopping. Further, it is a feature of the collapse of partisanship in Western democracy, which as Barei (2000) demonstrates, has also become a feature of Botswana politics and perhaps even African politics. In this regard, news management/packaging politics, a process whereby politicians try to influence and regulate the flow of political information and messages through the media (Franklin 1990) was employed in earnest. ‘No detail was too small to pick over. No journalist was too weak not to worry about’ (Mandelson 2002: ix). Nothing was left to chance.

Political marketing is a professionalization of politics. Experts such as demographers, economists, media professionals, economists, lawyers, statisticians, historians and academics are engaged. Some of them as consultants. In the US party presidential primaries, for instance, candidates’ aides travel with a list of professionals to be contacted on the go and are thus able to respond to every situation as it arises. Press and communication assistants help the candidates look good on television and in the press. Although research has not directly linked media reports with political opinions, it is generally believed that a most favourable image is desirable. The campaign teams in the US also slant stories to target racial, ethnic and religious groups (Polsby and Widavsky 2000).

New Labour, as the party was rebranded since the Blackpool conference of 1990 (Stephenson 2002), decided to abandon ‘policy and ideological baggage’ (Mandelson 2002: xv). Blairism, or ‘big tent’ strategy, as Mandelson (2002:xv) puts it, involved a new, less confrontational but more consensual politics. They aimed for permanent change, rather than short-lived glory. They wanted to take advantage of the Tories, who had been thrown into disarray and its leader Margaret Thatcher had resigned in 1990, and Labour could have won even with the weakest of candidates, including Foot (Morgan 2007). However, certainly that victory could not have been maintained, if the Blairites did not come up with fundamental changes, with Blair becoming the first Labour leader ever to win two consecutive elections. He actually won three times.

Labour under Blair became a more market-oriented party. Instead of relying on voters to decide at the polling box, the party sought to find in advance what the voters needed and align their policies with such interests. Though political marketing is a controversial issue, unfortunately, like in a football match, it is the goals that matter. As President Richard Nixon of the US famously declared, there is no prize for number 2 in politics.

Blair taught his party new language (Stephenson 2002). The ‘new party’ avoided using labels to describe itself because it did not want to confuse voters. ‘The problem is that, in politics, people like labels and New Labour does not “label” easily’ (Mandelson 2002: xxix). Mandelson says the party’s left must concentrate on the end, which is modernization and very little on the means: ‘The left can never succeed for long by being backward-looking and reactionary’ (Mandelson 2002:xvii). Gordon Brown concentrated on the economics of the party. They cautiously embraced the market, whilst stating in the place of Clause IV that ‘power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few’ (Stephenson 2002: 91). They also cut back on big government, that is huge public spending, to create momentum for the economy. In addition, Brown as chancellor altered monetary policy by handing determination of interest rates to central bank (Stephenson 2002). The results were encouraging as the majority of members joined the party since Blair’s ‘modern social democracy’ (Mandelson 2002: xvii).

What is important to point out here is that all these changes were planned well in advance. Millpark (the party headquarters in London) under Blair became a hive of activities. Policy making assumed enormous proportions. This was not only done with expert advice but a shadow cabinet also played a key role.

Political Marketing: Historical Overview

The phenomenon of political marketing is a contested concept with no single unanimous definition or focus (Scammell 1999; Lilleker *et al* 2000; Savigny and Temple 2010). Much of the literature has focused on electioneering and political communications and there is no agreement as to what is the focus of the study. Terms employed range from ‘political management’, ‘packaged politics’, ‘promotional politics’ or ‘modern political communications’ (Scammell 1999:718). These reflected, by 1999, the fact that the subject was still taking shape.

Some scholars even regard it as anathema, as politics and marketing are seen as strange bedfellows. Some accuse marketers of manipulative politics, promoting style at the expense of substance. Politicians contend that it is their job to persuade society on what form it should take and not marketers with their research. Whilst some acknowledge the positive role of marketing, they caution that it is wrong to suggest that voters exercising rationale choice vote for the best management team. Rather, they vote parties that reflect their own vision of society (Lilleker *et al* 2000).

However political marketing is not a new concept. The term was first used by Kelley in 1956 to refer to the increasing influence of professional persuaders in politics (Scammell 1999:23). Kelley’s argument was that since the Second World War, it was already known that mass democracy required new instruments of social control. In this sense, the purpose still remained mass persuasion but the addition of ‘marketing’ was to replace the discredited term ‘propaganda’ and also to acknowledge the increasing role of professionals from commercial industry in political persuasion.

The earliest example of political marketing in party politics starts with the US presidential election campaign of 1960, between Richard Nixon and John Kennedy. The latter, advised by public relations specialists was judged to have won the television debate but lost the radio one. Though there was no evidence of the effects on voters, the 1960 debate ‘entered campaigning mythology as proof of the impact of television and the power of image over substance’ (Scammell 1999:72). To some however, Nixon’s 1968 victory upon the advice of Madison Avenue advertisers marked the genesis of real influence of marketing in presidential politics.

In Britain on the other hand, the watershed moment was in 1978 when Saatchi and Saatchi helped Margaret Thatcher to a historic landslide (Scammell 1999 and Harrop 1990). Since then it became a requirement for major political parties to use professional expertise. Not to do so was headline news itself. So in the UK the 1980s can generally be taken to be the start of organized political marketing.

Academic Treatment of Political Marketing

Researchers mainly with a political science background have tended to locate marketing in campaign studies and not electioneering. Even then, while it is agreed that marketing is significant in modern campaigns, there is disagreement whether it is an adequate theoretical framework to explain campaigns. Marketing has been criticized for rationalizing success or failure in hindsight than in offering theoretical tools. In this respect, if political marketing is mentioned it is reduced to a subset of campaign studies (Scammell 1999). In the political communications literature, political marketing is treated as only one aspect of broad processes. It is regarded primarily as a response to developments in media and communications technologies. In addition to this, political communications scholars also focus on campaigns. It is within political communications that the concept of modernization or Americanization of politics has come. Modernization is a theoretical framework used to understand trends in electioneering practice. It has two major attributes, development of non-ideological catch-all parties and the transformation of the media from a channel of communication to a major power player central to the campaign process.

Research in the US along these lines was agenda of the political communications scholars in the 1990s and reflected obsessions with voter apathy and cynicism with politics. Political communications is blamed for rhetoric of advertising, negative political advertising, empty political campaigning,

styles of reporting that reduces politicians to sound bites, among other things (Scammell 1999). In this way, political marketing might thus be accused of the same, but as we shall see from the marketing and management scholars, that would be a mistake.

Finally, political scientists have tended to focus on party policies and conflict theory. They have endeavoured to highlight the conflicting interests between voters. Marketing on the other hand has emphasised image and common interests than conflicts (Harrop 1990). The argument is that voters want results. They do not care whether a party has a good policy or not. What they want is a party that appears to be in a position to do that which it promises. In the 1980s, Labour had good policies but lacked the appeal to lead, in the eyes of the voters. The Tories, with poor manifestos dominated because they appeared like a serious service party (Harrop 1990).

Management and marketing scholars have been more positive about political marketing. The leading scholar Phillip Kotler has argued that election campaigning has an inherently marketing character and that there is more commonality of salesmanship than difference between business and politics (Scammell 1999). He has argued that this should not be confined to profit driven enterprises but also to the non-profit like politics. The political market, for instance, just like the business market, has sellers and buyers, who exchange items of value. The marketing and management scholars posit that marketing strategy is central to electoral success. The emphasis is on strategy and in contrast to the political science scholarship, here focus shifts from the techniques of promotion to the overall strategic objectives of the party. In this way, political marketing is no longer just a subset of broader processes but political communication becomes a subset of political marketing. The main drivers of change in the campaigning practice and communications are not the media or Americanisation, but the campaigners' understanding of the political market (Scammell 1999).

Marketing is focused on shifting power from the seller to the buyer. It takes a consumer-oriented approach that puts the consumer at the beginning of the production consumption cycle. The logic is that companies or organizations can best achieve their objectives through customer satisfaction and this is best achieved by attending to customer wants and needs at the beginning and at the end of the production process. Scholars often compare political marketing to service-industry relationship marketing, for it is different from ordinary everyday marketing where a tangible product is sold. Intangible products are more difficult to sell than physical products. The intangible products are more technical and even the consumers find them so (Harrop 1990). The decision to purchase the product may be a slower, more thoughtful process. The buyer cannot physically see the product ahead of purchase and this creates a high uncertainty factor. In this respect the buyer relies on information and would thus look to different sources of information, including the media. Selling in this respect cannot be a one-off but an exchange relationship where the customer invests trusts and the politician fulfils the promise.

So the purpose of political marketing is to reduce uncertainty for potential customers by way of confidence building strategies. Reputation becomes the central product because it is the only asset that can be sold to buyers in advance. The way to build confidence through sale is creation of an information policy, an externally authenticated record of achievement and through credible commitments and promises.

In the service industry, like law, medicine, or accounting, reputation/image is crucial. It is the main factor that determines whether services will be bought or not. Image perception of a party leader/the party is similarly very important. To achieve credibility of the unforeseen product, party leaders must not only deliver service, but personify it too. 'They must make tangible the intangible strengths of their party' (Harrop 1990:279). This is even more crucial for opposition parties, for there is often only one supplier at a time, that is, one party in power. In this respect, opposition parties need marketing more than government parties. They also need a different marketing strategy, for they have no record to speak of and this is especially true for the BNF which has never been in power. The opposition are often judged on how well they have conducted themselves in a campaign.

An analysis of the 1983 British general elections led to the conclusion that it is not the manifesto that matters but the overall perception of the party's character. There is also virtual consensus that the 'extraordinary' victory of the Labour Party in 1997 occurred largely due to the damage of the image of the Tories after their withdrawal from the European Monetary System in 1992. As Scammell (1999:729) notes that 'parties then must attend to political image if they want to be serious players in the political market. This is not an optional extra, nor a simple response to media power nor an effect of American influence: it is a strategic imperative of the political market'.

It is not surprising that Harrop credits political marketing as adding 'a fresh slant on understanding electoral change' (Harrop 1990:277). Savigny and Temple (2010) acknowledge it as a reality and an important part of the study of political science. However, they criticize it for being prescriptive and for downplaying the important role of the media as a power block in its own right in the political process. They have particular criticism for the management approach to marketing. But they do not question its relevance and acknowledge its importance.

Lessons from the New Labour

On 20 July 2010 the BNF (until 2011 Botswana's official opposition in parliament) voted Duma Gideon Boko as its president, replacing Tsweletse Moupo. This marked a major shift in BNF politics. At 40, Boko became the youngest leader to assume the party's top position. He took over the leadership at a critical time in the life of the party, which had suffered yet another humiliating defeat in the general elections in 2009. Boko, like Tony Blair in England, was elected by many trusting that he would shore up the fortunes of the party and spruce up its image. He brings with him the vitality of youth and the sharpness of mind and is popularly described in the media as a prominent human rights and criminal lawyer. Like the Labour Party that Blair inherited in 1997, the BNF is a party that is historically steeped in leftist doctrine. Whilst the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) is right-centre in orientation, it loathes emphasizing ideology. Whenever the issue was raised in the past, its cadres maintained that their business was service delivery to the population.

On the day that he replaced the late Smith in 1997, Blair knew that he had only two choices, to stick to the past or introduce new fundamental changes to take Labour forward. And he chose the latter. Boko has exactly the same choice. Analysts of Labour have at a conceptual level raised many factors that explained the party's decline over the years, especially from the 1979 general elections to 1997. The party had been in continued opposition for a solid 18 years. One of the major reasons for the decline of the party has been ideological shift over the years. Interestingly, the perennial failure of the Labour at the ballot box have also been analyzed in a way that can apply to the BNF. The ideological shifts of the party have been described as: materialist (product of economic and social determinants), ideational (relating to ideology), electoral (strategies to win elections), institutional (related to structure, intra-party agents and actors), the one that synthesizes all these (Callaghan *et al* 2003).

The BNF: A Historical Overview and Problems

Formed in October 1971 in Mochudi, the BNF was the idea of Kenneth Koma, who had initially tried unifying the then existing opposition parties in Botswana. He actually recruited to his ranks the leadership of these parties such as Simon Tladi (Botswana Independence Party) and Klaas Motshidisi and Dikobe Mntumetse amongst others from Botswana Peoples Party. As a Marxist educated in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia and an adherent of Mao Tse Tung in China, Koma formed a left leaning party based on the ideals he learnt overseas. The party rhetoric opposed ownership of private property and promised massive nationalization upon assumption of power. Party literature such as the famed *Pamphlet Number 1, Education in Black Africa, The Second Phase of the African Revolution* and the *Clarion Call* were written with this tone. The *Clarion Call* was actually the name used by labour leftists. However the interesting fact is as Boko acknowledged, BNF is not officially a socialist

party at all (Motlogelwa 2010).

The party, like Labour has courted controversy, internecine strife and disarray from the outset. However, unlike Labour, which has relatively stabilized, the BNF is yet to know peace. Although factionalism is normal in party politics and can be a force for good, the one in BNF is of the degenerative type that threatens the existence of the movement (Bouceck 2009). At the time of writing this article (January 2011), party cadres were exchanging bile in newspaper pages.

Makgala (2003) provides a comprehensive history of BNF feuds. It is clear from his discussion that the BNF and feuds have been like Siamese twins. These have ranged from accusations and counter-accusations of tribalism, reactionary behaviour, alleged traitors, and newcomers derailing party direction, petty bourgeoisies hijacking the party, BDP infiltration, opportunism and lack of political education. Four years after formation of the party, in October 1969, the then president of the party, Daniel Kwele, a member of the historically marginalized Kalanga tribe was like Aneurin Bevan (Labour party veteran and Health Minister, 1947-1951) bypassed for the position of party president in party's election congress of that year. Instead, Bathoeng Maseitsiwe, a powerful chief of the Bangwaketse tribe was presented as the alternative. Maseitsiwe had just resigned from the House of Chiefs, disgruntled at the BDP's curtailment of the historical powers of the chiefs (Makgala 2003.) The BNF leadership had reasoned that Maseitsiwe would give way to Kwele in the event of the party winning state power, highly unlikely at the time as is now.

However, in 1970, Kwele resigned from the party, arguing that the BNF had acted in bad faith and that Maseitsiwe was an opportunist. However, this had been a BNF strategy to counter the popularity of Seretse Khama, abdicated Bangwato chief who was the leader of the BDP. Knight Maripe, a fellow Kalanga and BNF candidate in Tati constituency in the same year, also resigned and supported Kwele's charge of tribalism (Tutwane 1998). A BNF veteran has argued that this is untrue because their intention was to counter the BDP (Motshidisi 2007) and this worked well as the party managed to get three parliamentary seats in Maseitsiwe's territory and he was amongst the winners. The fallout from the Kwele-Maseitsiwe feud included loss of a sole BNF councillor in Kweneng and another in the capital Maborone (Makgala 2003). In 1970 BNF congress scheduled for Mahalapye was moved to Bathoeng's stronghold of Kanye, the Bangwaketse capital and he was elected party president. This irked a sizeable number of activists and led some to resign from the party, including some Kalanga in the Central District clearly believing that Maseitsiwe was favoured and that tribalism was at work (Makgala 2003). Koma was also accused of tribalism throughout his presidency (Mokopakgosi and Molomo 2000) and was accused of promoting his Bangwato tribe, in what was called 'ngwatoism' (Makgala 2003:311).

Instead of addressing the building pattern of disgruntlement at party leadership style, Koma and his team dismissed their comrades as opportunists and Koma used Marxist dialectical analysis, arguing that in a Front, one tendency will tend to prevail at a particular time. Naturally some people would leave the party but it would grow. Another BNF figurehead, Paul Rantao was fond of saying the BNF was like a mighty river, which thrusts afar, anything that stands on its way as its banks broke (from my personal memory). In this way, over the years the party lost opportunities to employ proper conflict management and resolution problems, for it did not acknowledge mistakes or poor leadership. The founding president of the party, Ray Molomo also left the party in 1970 saying that it had lost direction (Makgala 2003:3-4).

Conflict grew and led to many defections in the 1980s. However, the most devastating split for the BNF came in 1998 after violent confrontation in Palapye and led to the formation of the Botswana Congress Party (BCP). It was formed by those members more on the right of the political spectrum, who had been rubbished as petty-bourgeoisie by the left. These included Michael Dingake, former Robben Island inmate alongside Mandela, but who had been dismissed as a new comer by the left. Dingake is however said to have been a member of the party before he was locked up in the 1960s. He had been elected party vice president a party congress in Mahalapye in 1993 with Koma's open backing.

Koma had also unilaterally extended campaigning for party primary election for Gaborone Central constituency thus helping Dingake win against his old ally Mareledi Mditshwa (Makgala 2003: 17) just as it happened to Bevan in Labour. The BCP split cost the BNF 11 MPs and 80 councillors. At the 1999 election the party only got six parliamentarians whilst the newly formed BCP got just one.

Whilst some in the BNF leadership declared that the resignation of members who went on to form the BCP was good riddance and the party would stabilize, that was not to be the case. The problems have proved to be structural and beg for deeper introspection and resolution. In 2003 the party split again as National Democratic Front (NDF) was formed by Koma and his allies, such as lawyer and fellow leftist Dick Bayford. In the tradition of the BNF, it followed the 2001 Kanye Congress. Two opposing groups had emerged, the Partyline (supported by Koma and led by Peter Woto and Lemogang Ntime, amongst others) and the Concerned Group, led by veterans such as Mareledi Mditshwa and Klass Motshidisi who had been disillusioned in the aftermath of the 1997 Ledumang party congress (*Botswana Gazette*, 2 November 2001). At the Kanye Congress, attorney Mphahlele Moupono defeated Koma's preferred Partyline candidate, Peter Woto. As has happened many times in the BNF, victory was questioned and the two groups went for each other's throat. In the end Koma and others were suspended while Woto and others were expelled from the party (Makgala 2003, p. 18).

However, this did not bring peace to the BNF as some had hoped. Moupono was personally to bring shame to the BNF beginning June 2001. Whilst in London on a mysterious trip that was not known to his colleagues in the central committee, he got stranded in London, with insufficient funds and was rescued by the Botswana High Commission, at the behest of President Ian Khama. This became headline news. His law firm was also found to be wanting in its professionalism, failing to meet the requirements of the Legal Practitioners Act in keeping proper accounts and was struck from the roll of practicing attorneys. Moupono began soliciting funds from party members, through his allies. A bank account was opened in this regard. Moupono fell out with his colleagues, some of whom had formed what they called Temporary Platform in protest. This was formed after their expulsion and suspension from the party around 2008-9. He lost the support of his Vice President Kathleen Letshabo, fellow socialists Monageng Mogalakwe, Akanyang Magama and Elmon Tafa who questioned both his leadership and Marxist credentials.

Given his embarrassing private life, which dragged the name of the party in the mud, Moupono resisted calls to step down. Instead he called a special congress in Molepolole in May 2007 that endorsed him as leader. Emboldened by this show of support, he went on to purge opponents, the Koma-style. He had a new ally in Mphahlele Moupono, who replaced Letshabo as Vice President at the Molepolole congress. In typical BNF style, more expulsions were made but later reversed by the new leadership of Boko. However, the damage had already been done. The BNF has lost its long held main opposition status in parliament and now has just 10 MPs in parliament. Its former Vice President Moupono, himself has retraced his steps to the BDP where he originally came from. However, it was fortunate enough to benefit from the BDP internal bickering and has welcomed into its ranks former Secretary General of the BDP and Kanye North MP Kentse Rammidi.

What can be learnt from the Moupono episode is poor ethical leadership. If political marketing tools had been employed, it would have probably long been determined that he was a political liability. In Western democracies, the misdeeds of Moupono are undebatable resigning matters. Moupono's lieutenants claimed that his troubled image would not hurt the party as the two were separate. Elementary students of political communication know that this does not wash. Liberal Democrats leader in the UK Charles Kennedy was forced to resign his position in 2001 just for a mere drinking problem. The sociologist Malenna Selowane (2002: 1) could not have said it better when she concluded:

The question of whether the Botswana National Front will ever rise above its internal conflicts to develop a vision that will help it to respond to electoral demands for meaningful competition for government power in the immediate future has not been

settled. It would seem that this party will need dramatic transformations from within to rise above the shackles of its ideological inclinations towards meaningless elite alliances and consequent proneness to factional break-ups.

Selolwane was saying this in questioning BNF's claim to socialism, as to whether it is in accord with voter interests or expectations. The answer is in the negative as her questions suggest. New Labour was able to exorcise its ghosts of sickle and hammer and has a new vision. That onerous task now falls to the leadership of Boko. As Selolwane suggested, the voters seem to think otherwise. Massive BNF crushing at the polls has made this very clear. However, the tools of political marketing such as surveys and focus group interviews can very easily answer this question. Old parties of BNF stature should engage in opinion polls during electioneering so that they know exactly where the problem lies. Otherwise they would continue to unjustly blame the poor voter, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and even the BDP for their election woes.

The BNF needs to re-examine its national anthem which speaks of British neo-colonialism, just like Labour did with the Red Flag which its MPs even sang in the House of Commons. Barei (2000) highlights how reshaping the party image has helped Labour appeal to the voter. The party needs to pause and find out if this song can attract the young voters, who make the majority of the population. Blair was not scared to abolish Labour's 'Red Flag', a then popular song associated with the tradition of the party.

The party must also re-examine its close collaboration with international communist organizations such as the South African Communist Party (SACP) and membership of Socialist International. It has become a matter of pride and custom to parade SACP representatives at party conferences and congresses as allies. As Selolwane points out, early post-colonial parties in Africa like the African National Congress first had to root out the foundations of capitalism like apartheid, and then introduce their 'new order'. The experience of the ANC/SACP who fought and replaced imperialist racists and a BNF which never shed blood for independence are different. That is why for a long time the ANC/SACP will rule South Africa for many years to come, because they are parties of liberation. As Barei (2000) has demonstrated, Labour had to embrace big business, who helped finance it in the elections that brought it to power in 1997. The position of the BNF is even more desperate. Its performance has been so dismal that it has never attained state power.

Conclusion

The BNF needs to move forward and embrace new thinking. There is nothing inherently wrong with socialist principles as the BDP has accepted some of them such as free education and old age pension initially advocated by the BNF. They are also used in the UK and other Western democracies. The main problem here is the concept of socialism is scary to most voters. It conjures in their minds state terror, confiscation of their private property, incompetent governance and widespread poverty. The BDP also vigorously used allegations of civil strife as a likely outcome of BNF rule and this had the effect of driving a wedge between the voters and the party. The nail on the coffin of communism was the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Whilst Mokopagosi and Molomo (2000) argue that adoption of the Social Democratic Programme (SDP) in 1990 rid the BNF of its Communist image, this has not turned out to be the case. Adoption of a policy document is not synonymous with change. What is needed is a dedicated programme of action to rebrand the party, as well as change of rhetoric, as happened to the Labour Party under Blair from 1997, resulting in a vibrant, re-born 'New Labour.' The onus is on the party to make itself attractive to the voters. Otherwise it will be relegated to the dustbin of history, just like the once formidable BPP. Political marketing is the way to go. It will allow the party to assess and focus on the needs of the voters. It will help the party to enhance its image and reputation. This is paramount for a party that is in opposition and has no government experience to boast of.