

EZ – אקטואליה

Labor's moment of truth

By Haaretz Editorial

The Labor Party's constitution stipulates that after Knesset elections in which a party candidate is not chosen to form the government, the party will hold early primaries to elect its leader. Amir Peretz has recently said that he would adhere to the party's constitution to the letter and that anyone who wishes to replace him would have to wait for the leadership primaries, which will be held exactly when the constitution dictates.

However, as the date of the primaries began to approach, "sources close to Peretz" started making statements doubting the need for them. Indeed, the party's constitution was made to be upheld. But in view of the fact that the situation in other parties is worse, and some parties' institutions are mere props while one person decides on the list of candidates, Peretz's desire to put himself up for reelection in six months has also weakened.

It is saddening to see that despite the existing tools and rules, personal motives prevail and interested parties can always find an interpretation to justify changing the rules of the game at the suitable moment. Thus Shimon Peres managed to prevent early primaries after losing the elections to Ariel Sharon, and thus Labor's central committee may decide tomorrow whether to hold the primaries in May 2007, as the constitution requires, or postpone them until Peretz's chances of winning improve.

In the past week, several petitions were filed against holding the primaries, using Peres' precedent as an argument for putting off the leadership face-off by 35 months. Now the party's central committee will have to decide whether to change the constitution. Some say this is not the time for dispute and contention, and that the party's ministers must be given a chance to rehabilitate the country and the Israel Defense Forces after the war in Lebanon.

Labor's central committee members must understand that the primaries are not merely an internal party affair, precisely because of the need to rehabilitate the public's confidence in the Israel Defense Forces, replace the chief of staff and learn the lessons from the failure of the war, which Peretz initiated and led, among others. They must understand that the primaries are not an internal affair precisely because it is clear today that Peretz should not have been defense minister to begin with and it is doubtful whether he understands his mistake even in retrospect.

Labor under Peretz's leadership is not succeeding in making an impression because the public, the army and the prime minister have no confidence in its leader. It has recently transpired that he cannot, or will not, even evacuate illegal outposts. His agreement to add Avigdor Lieberman to the cabinet in a position dealing with security issues also reflects Peretz's lack of authority and presence in the areas he is in charge of. Peretz entered office with a false, unfounded feeling of security and is continuing to behave in this manner even after the war. If he manages to rehabilitate his political power by putting off the primaries and holding a new membership census in Labor, it will appear that political wheeling and dealing is all he is good at.

Labor's central committee meeting is a moment of truth and an opportunity, because it provides an occasion to shake the government out of the stagnation of war encompassing it. It is also an opportunity to treat the candidacy for defense minister more seriously.

VOCABULARY

Labor Party - מפלגת העבודה	filed - להגיש רשמית, לתייק
constitution - חוקה	precedent - תקדים
stipulates - להתנות, לקבוע תנאים	argument - טיעון, נימוק, ארגומנט
elections - בחירות	dispute - ויכוח, מחלוקת
candidate - מועמד	contention - ריב/טענה
form - ליצור, להקים, לעצב	rehabilitate - לשקם
government - ממשלה, ממשל, שילטון	internal - פנימי
primaries - בחירות מקדימות, פריימריז	precisely - בדיוק
adhere - לדבוק ב	confidence - אמון, בטחון
leadership - מנהיגות	chief of staff - ראש מטה כללי
exactly - בדיוק	failure - כשל, נכשון
dictate - להכתיב	initiated - ליזום, להתחיל
approach - להתקרב, לגשת	affair - פרשה, עניין, עסק
statements - הצהרות	doubtful - מוטל בספק
doubting - לפקפק, להטיל ספק	retrospect - במבט לאחור
upheld - לתמוך, לקיים, לאשר	making an impression - לעשות רושם
situation - מצב, סיטואציה	transpired - התברר/התרחש
mere - רק, בלבד, ותו לא	evacuate - לפנות
props - אביזרים	illegal outposts - מאחזים בלתי חוקיים
desire - רצון, תשוקה	agreement - הסכמה
reelection - בחירה מחדש	reflects - משקף
weakened - מוחלש	authority - סמכות
saddening - מעציב, מצער	presence - נוכחות, הופעה
motives - מניעים, גורמים	false - כוזב
prevail - לנצח, לגבור	unfounded - לא מבוססת
interpretation - פירוש, תרגום	manner - אופן, צורה, שיטה, דרך
justify - להצדיק	census - מפקד
suitable - מתאים, טוב	opportunity - הזדמנות
thus - לכן	provides - מספק, מעניק
prevent - למנוע	occasion - הזדמנות, אירוע
central committee - ועד מרכזי	stagnation - חוסר פעילות
postpone - לדחות, להשהות	candidacy - מועמדות
petitions - עצומות, עתירות	