

DA and Cope join hands to oppose labour broking ban

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COPE and the DA have put up a united front against the ANC's stand on banning labour broking, with Cope MP Phillip Dexter calling it tantamount to "trying to ban capitalism".

In the first display of solidarity between Cope – the break-away movement from the governing ANC which is the official opposition in five provinces – and the national official opposition DA, the two parties jointly called for regulation of labour broking and the setting up of a regulatory body that would prevent exploitation of workers rather than lead to the end of seasonal work.

The ANC, which fought the recent national elections on a platform of supporting quality jobs, is seeking to end the practice. Union federation Cosatu, its alliance partner, has vociferously called for its scrapping. Federation president Sidumo Dlamini told the recent Cosatu congress that labour broking and casualisation did not belong "in a civilized society".

Dexter, the former chairman of union investment arm Nehawu Securities, joked that he was a socialist himself but he did not believe it was possible simply to ban capitalism. Flanked by DA MPs Ian Ollis and Andrew Louw, Dexter apologised for the absence of Willie Madisha, who is now a Cope MP and labour spokesman. "He is in his constituency," he said.

Ollis argued that a regulatory board should preside over the labour broker business and prevent exploitation. Dexter said a ban would not end the practice, which would be driven underground like illegal mining and lead to new forms of exploitation.

The ANC has argued that the practice of labour broking leads to exploitation and casualisation. Parliament's labour committee, chaired by Lumka



Cope MP Phillip Dexter says a ban will not end exploitation.

Yengeni, is to hold hearings around the country next week on plans to ban the practice.

Ollis said when Namibia banned the practice an estimated 150 000 jobs were lost.

All three MPs emphasised that the industry did indeed involve exploitation but this needed urgent evaluation. Ollis said banning it was like banning driving in Johannesburg because the metropolitan police were not doing their job.

In a joint position paper, Cope and the DA noted that the industry generated turnover of "in excess of R23 billion a year" and placed more than 500 000 temporary assignees in jobs every day in South Africa.

Self regulation was required, they said, with industry peers and the government monitoring the process. There should be mandatory registration of labour brokers and an institute of labour brokers "that will enforce a set of standards for the industry".