



## Labour brokers 'are rapists'

By Carien Du Plessis

Labour brokers were called "rapists" and blamed for everything from domestic violence to the spread of HIV and Aids at chaotic parliamentary public hearings in Germiston last night.

While labour brokers admitted that some within the industry did not comply with labour legislation, their calls for better enforcement of the rules rather than an outright ban of the practice were met with heckling and jeering from an audience packed with about 300 raucous Cosatu supporters bearing placards, sticks and blowing on vuvuzelas.

Lusizo Makhabela-Mashele - who stood in for Parliament's labour committee chairwoman, Lumka Yengeni, struggled to call the crowd to order as cheers went up for those calling for a ban on labour brokers.

An hour into the three-hour long proceedings, DA MPs Ian Ollis and Andrew Louw walked out, along with Cope MP Willie Madisha, a former Cosatu president, against whom most of the crowd's scorn was directed and who was branded a "liar" in their songs.

Madisha said afterwards it was painful to see a democratic process so disrupted.

"We went there to listen to the people, and if you want to make laws, you have to listen," he said.

Madisha, Louw and Ollis said the hearings - attended by top Cosatu leaders, including its president, Sdumo Dlamini - had been turned into a Cosatu rally.

When ANC MP Makhabela-Mashele wrapped up proceedings, she said the DA and Cope MPs had left because they had already made up their minds about the issue and did not like what they had heard, where "99.9 percent" of people wanted labour broking scrapped.

Young Communist League Gauteng secretary, Alex Mashilo, threatened mass protests should a ban not be imposed.

Some in the audience threw plastic water bottles and cold drink cans at Plaatjie Mashego of the Unemployed People's Party when he said he supported labour brokers because they helped unemployed people find jobs.

MPs heard testimony from people who claimed they received shift allowances as low as 50 cents or R1, while a temporary post office worker brought payslips to prove he was paid only R2.72 an hour by the labour broker who had secured his services.

Colleagues employed full-time by the post office earned nearly three times as much, he said.

Others who testified told of workers in the security industry forced to have sex with labour brokers if they wanted to remain employed.

Labour brokers were then blamed for the spread of HIV and Aids and the prevalence of domestic violence.

One speaker said all labour brokers were white people interested only in suppressing black people by subjecting them to temporary jobs and bad pay.

Cosatu Gauteng secretary Dumisane Dakile, who had earlier picketed with the crowd outside the Ekurhuleni council chambers, said unions could not organise workers contracted to labour brokers. He also threatened to expose politicians he said made money out of labour broking.

Labour broker Werner Laubscher, of the Association of Nursing Labour Brokers, argued that they helped fill vacancies where skills were scarce.

The committee is holding its fourth and final provincial hearing in Pietermaritzburg today, after which the committee will meet next week to consider what it has heard.

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