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Subcontracting is Just a Ploy to Woo Votes

Masibulele Yaso reports

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27 February 2009

The ANC's policy on outsourcing and subcontracting is 'just a ploy to woo voters', according to sociologist and lecturer in the Sociology Department, Dr Lucien van der Walt.

Van der Walt told *Vuvuzela* that 'because of the election mood', the ANC would campaign 'on pro-poor and pro-worker erasures'.

Yet, he says, the party was always committed to neo-liberal measures. 'The current global storm will reinforce its commitment to this neo-liberal approach', he believes.

In their manifesto, the ANC says that, in order to avoid exploitation of workers and ensure decent work for all workers, as well as 'protect the employment relationship', it will introduce laws to regulate contract work, sub-contracting and out-sourcing.

It will, says the manifesto, also address the problem of labour broking and 'prohibit certain abusive practices'.

Van der Walt says here is already too much labour regulation on outsourcing. 'On paper, there are probably more than enough

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regulations that, if applied, could make the use of casual labour very difficult’.

He said the ANC’s ‘sudden stress on stopping unfair labour practices’ arises primarily from the need ‘to keep Cosatu [the Congress of South African Trade Unions] on side’.

Outsourcing at Wits is ‘very efficient’, says Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Finance, Professor Patrick Fitzgerald. The University outsources a number of non-core functions such as cleaning, catering and transport. This has proved far more efficient than if the university tried to carry out these functions itself. ‘Certainly these things now work much better than they used to’, he said.

Van der Walt says the private and public sectors are likely to continue with outsourcing and subcontracting of labour. ‘Both sectors are under immense pressure to cut costs and increase the rate of exploitation – and under relatively little pressure to change’, he said.

Cosatu was not available for comment as the federation was locked in a three-day meeting of [the] central executive committee. Nehawu [National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union] secretary, Billy Cebekhulu, would not comment.