

Informalisation

comments from the floor

Ravi Naidoo: There are four points regarding informalisation that need to be clarified.

- ❑ We need to determine what we mean by informalisation. In the main it is about the informal sector or informal work. However, for some it is only about work. They regard the informal sector as a false sector.
- ❑ What is the impact of informalisation on the way we understand a job? For instance, the way in which unemployment has been redefined to exclude those who have worked for at least one hour in the past week, even if it was for kind. Does this mean that those people no longer need assistance because they are not 'unemployed'?
- ❑ What is the impact of informalisation on unions?
- ❑ What should unions do about informalisation? There is the debate around a basic income grant and social security. Unions have to find new ways of organising as well. Maybe the unions should adopt social movement unionism to expand their influence.

New labour brokers?

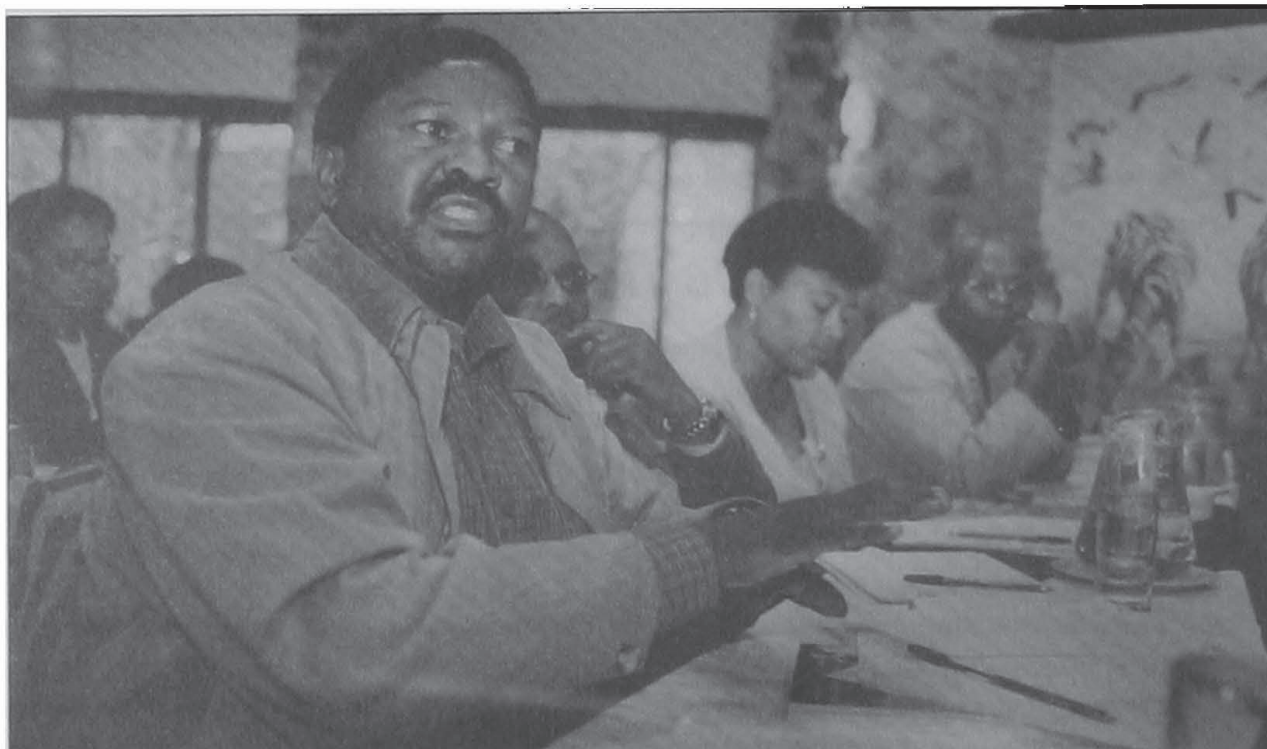
Jan Theron: The possibility of retrenchments has been dealt with differently in different companies. One initiative is where the shopstewards have been appointed as sub-contractors. Thus they become labour brokers and

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entrepreneurs. Should the unions not be redefining themselves to supply their members to companies – a type of labour broker? But it should not be in the way we know labour brokers now.

Jane Barrett: In three sectors in the transport industry the nature of employment has changed. In the bus sector the government has introduced a change in how it subsidises the sector. So the bus companies have to tender for contracts. This means that the bus workers' employment contract has changed and they experience job insecurity. When the employer's contract ends the workers' contracts also end. A possibility being discussed is that SATAWU supplies the workers by means of a pool. The union would keep a register of the bus workers. It is a way to deal with the change in the workers' employment contract.

The other initiative in SATAWU is the organising of taxi drivers. They are the employees of small business owners. There is no certainty of income for drivers. When they do receive wages it is in cash. So the union is rethinking its policy of 'no cash subs'. This policy is standard in the unions. But it is a block to recruiting casuals or those not on formal payrolls. If the policy changes it will have a knock-on effect on



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the way the union administers its finances

Another area of change is in the docks. Many port workers are employed on a seasonal basis. The union set up a formal dock labour pool initiative. It has been a bumpy ride and needs reviewing and overhauling. These are examples of how SATAWU is addressing changing employment contracts.

Art Sitas: Increasingly, unions or someone else has to take the labour market intermediary role to ensure things are done properly. It cannot allow labour brokers to go on as they are.

The role of informal labour

Tanya van Meelis: Informal labour is a threat to itself. It undermines workers in formal jobs, yet it often relies on the wages those workers in formal jobs earn.

Art Sitas: The propulsion of poverty is so strong that you don't think whether you are damaging someone else. The biggest

problem at the moment on the ground is the emergence of a patronage system that keeps people out.

Being a member

Oupa Lebulere: A worker is only a member of a union as long as he or she has a job. If they lose their jobs, they are no longer members. This is the relationship between workers and a union. It is based on the organisational form of unions. How can unions be representatives of social movement unionism with the definition of a union member as it is? Some unions cannot even assist retrenched workers in getting UIF. Why do unions not give advice on work? Why are unions not in the communities? Because of these reasons we cannot speak of social movement unionism.

Ravi Naidoo: Formal and informal workers are threatened by the same source. Unions can lead this initiative. But it requires that unions find new strategies. ★