

## On the election trail: **Workers speak**

*The ANC and Cosatu have attempted to ensure a co-ordinated election programme in the various provinces. In recent weeks provincial ANC and Cosatu leaders in Gauteng have targeted various factories, hospitals, schools and other workplaces as part of their election campaign. The **Labour Bulletin** went on the election trail to find out what workers are saying about the elections and the ANC.*

**O**ur first stop was Scaw Metals in Germiston where we were met by a few hundred workers who gathered to hear what Gauteng MEC for finance Jabu Moleketi (tipped to take over from finance minister Trevor Manuel) had to say about the upcoming elections. There was a general sense of support for the ANC, especially by those workers affiliated to Numsa. However, a worker belonging to Mewusa said: 'There is no hope in my heart for what the ANC is doing. They are giving my brothers less than what they should be doing.' Despite general support for the ANC, Moleketi faced some difficult questions. One worker asked him what government is doing in relation to HIV/AIDS while another worker questioned why the ANC was visiting the workers now just ahead of the elections. He said the

country was already ten years into democracy and this is the first time that the ANC had come to visit workers at Scaw Metals.

Moleketi explained how government was rolling out its antiretroviral programme. He emphasised however, that behaviour was critical in the fight against HIV/AIDS and urged workers against having lots of girlfriends. The youth, he said, should abstain until they had grown up. In an attempt to deflect the question around why the ANC was only now visiting the workers, former Cosatu vice-president Joyce Pikane (on the Gauteng ANC list) said Cosatu had been given the mandate by workers to vote for the ANC. It was the only political party 'we can talk to' and show our dissatisfaction with. Moleketi said the ANC had various forums which could

engage with workers and broader communities. It was obvious, he said, that the worker did not attend such meetings.

The next stop was Natalspruit Hospital. It is situated amidst a hive of informal sector activity. Getting to the hospital proved rather difficult with the current state of the roads. Turnout at the meeting proved rather disappointing as the hospital is considered to be one of Nehawu's largest branches in Gauteng. Reasons behind the poor turnout later became evident. During question time the Nehawu officials raised some of their concerns around the way in which the Gauteng health department was operating. The first issue related to problems being experienced by the staff in the hospital. A shop steward said that during apartheid workers had