



EPWP WORKERS FIGHTING FOR JOBS

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WITH unemployment nearly at 50 percent in the Northern Cape, more than 130 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) employees at the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture were on Wednesday informed that they will join the ranks of the unemployed as their contracts will expire at the end of September.

The affected employees picketed outside the provincial offices of the department in Kimberley yesterday.

The National, Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu), which is representing the workers, used yesterday's pickets to lambaste the management of the department for not absorbing the workers into permanent posts.

The Nehawu branch manager at the department, Victor Modise, said that the department had decided to terminate the contracts of the workers after it had apparently realised that it had not complied with the regulations of the EPWP programme.

"There are 134 people who will be unemployed at the end of next month. Some employees have been working on the EPWP project since 2013 but were never absorbed into permanent positions. They have now been served with notices that they will be without work at the end of next month. This is after they sacrificed years of service to the department," said Modise.

"Employees are only supposed to be on an EPWP programme for a maximum of two years, yet the department did not adhere to this regulation. The department created expectations among the workers by keeping them in their positions for such a long period.

"The department now wants to push these people out in order to employ their friends. This is unacceptable as these people will now be left jobless and without an income."

Modise said that they would intensify their pickets if the department did not adhere to their demands.

"We have requested meetings with management for several months now to raise these matters but we were never able to secure a meeting as management kept on dodging us.

"We will mobilise all our members from other districts and march to the offices of the ANC in Kimberley next week if a resolution is not reached with the department. The ANC said

all vacant and funded positions must be filled. There will be 134 vacant posts in the department, yet it does not want to fill them with the people it employed all these years."

Nehawu also accused the department of irregular appointments.

"There are some people who are employed by deployment. There are some who just report for duty. The department now wants to use these 134 positions for deployment purposes. That is unacceptable as people are not appointed on merit," Modise said.

The department stated yesterday that it was in a meeting with the union to resolve the matter.