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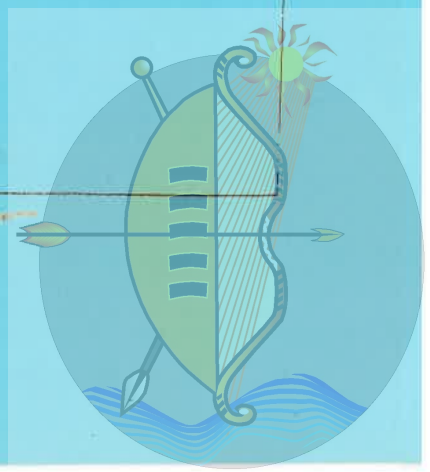
UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

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BEE

Sowetan  
25.10.99

## Black economic empowerment ignored

THE opening of the new international terminal at the Johannesburg International Airport by President Thabo Mbeki recently was a significant event, especially in the context of the president's vision of an African renaissance.

The grand structure of this terminal is symbolic of the country's transformation and heralds economic growth and job creation.

However, close scrutiny of the facts behind the terminal flies right in the face of black empowerment espoused by the president.

This vision is supposed to be based on the preferential awarding of contractual opportunities in the design, development and construction phases of the terminal to black economic empowerment (BEE) contractors. This would ensure skills transfer and the upliftment of previously disadvantaged people.

The process leading to the award of the construction contract, however, was in direct contrast to the principles of redressing past imbalances.

Contracts were instead awarded to companies with close ties to the Airports Company of South Africa (ACSA), in total disregard of the vision of BEE.

In one irregularity in the ACSA tender award, a company was awarded a contract through a process known as "Variation Orders", which does not require a tender. Through this process, the company received a contract to the value of R650 million over and above the initial award.

Despite the existence of a detailed BEE policy at ACSA, these glaring irregularities continue to go unchallenged.

It seems as though underhanded deals are

becoming the order of the day at some building construction companies and a few individuals continue to enrich themselves at an alarming rate.

One must ask the questions: who ultimately stands to gain? Is it the previously disadvantaged or those who are determined to monopolise privileges?

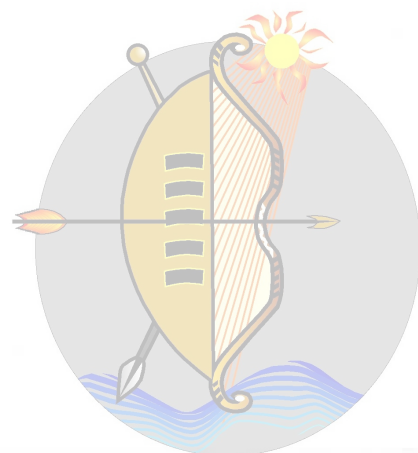
The end product of empowerment should be a meaningful economic upliftment of previously marginalised people.

For it to succeed, empowerment cannot be allowed to be the window-dressing of one or two "success stories" paraded before the world at every given opportunity.

Is there anyone out there who really cares about black economic empowerment?

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25.10.99 Sowetan



BEE

Sowetan  
29/2/2000

# The changing meaning and intentions of BEE

29/2/00. SOWETAN

THE concept and definition of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) has evolved and continues to change with the times and political phases to mean different things at different stages.

The term was first used in the South African political and economic lexicon during the uncertainty and political turmoil of the 1980s, but there was a lot of confusion about its meaning.

At the time it was located within the broader definition of black advancement and conflated with affirmative action.

The apartheid regime, in response to growing pressure to change, sought to define BEE in narrow terms of incorporating a small section of black people into the middle class and the economic structure without necessarily transforming the oppressive apartheid political economy.

Still faced with scepticism and reluctance from the mass democratic movement, the term was embraced in

the black community by organisations such as Nafcoc, who represented predominantly small black business.

As pressure mounted on the apartheid regime in the late 1980s, BEE was increasingly defined and brought within the broader struggle waged by the mass democratic movement and there was agreement that it must be part and parcel of the overall transformation of South Africa's political economy and of changing the political order that was oppressive to black people.

With the democratic transition of 1994, BEE became an imperative and central to the national agenda, as South Africa followed the experiences of countries the world over as an instrument in the hands of a people who were consciously excluded from the economic life by a previous unjust regime.

Black Economic Empowerment became and is still regarded as an instrument to undo the legacy of disempowerment and to restore the dig-

nity of the majority of black South Africans.

Black Economic Empowerment is currently back to the drawing boards as its advocates seek to find ways to implement a process, which six years after the democratic process, is generally agreed has not followed the political transformation in the country.

In a current major study into BEE by a special commission set up by the Black Management Forum (BMF) the term is once again put central to the national transformation that is aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past.

BEE is defined as an integrated process "to substantially and equitably transfer and confer the ownership, management and control of South Africa's financial and economic resources to the majority of its citizens, with a view to ensuring their broader and meaningful participation to achieve sustainable development and prosperity".

