

Cronin criticises superficial analysis of public sector in NDP

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SOUTH African Communist Party (SACP) deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin took a stab at the section of the National Development Plan (NDP) concerning bureaucracy — asserting it was superficial in its analysis of the situation in SA's public service.

This comes in the same week Planning Minister Trevor Manuel, under whose guidance the plan was produced, was 'slapped down' by President Jacob Zuma for imploring bureaucrats to take responsibility for government failures instead of perpetually blaming apartheid.

With his critique, Mr Cronin joins a growing list of leaders in the ruling alliance who have attacked the government's broad vision meant to reduce unemployment and poverty.

He told Business Day yesterday that the NDP was "not written in stone" and that it should be discussed. It concerned Mr Cronin that some people were "starting to turn the NDP into a monument" where the reaction was to either "pull it down as a statue, or to worship it".

Yesterday, in the SACP's online newsletter, he criticised the section dealing with the public sector.

Mr Cronin said he "agreed with

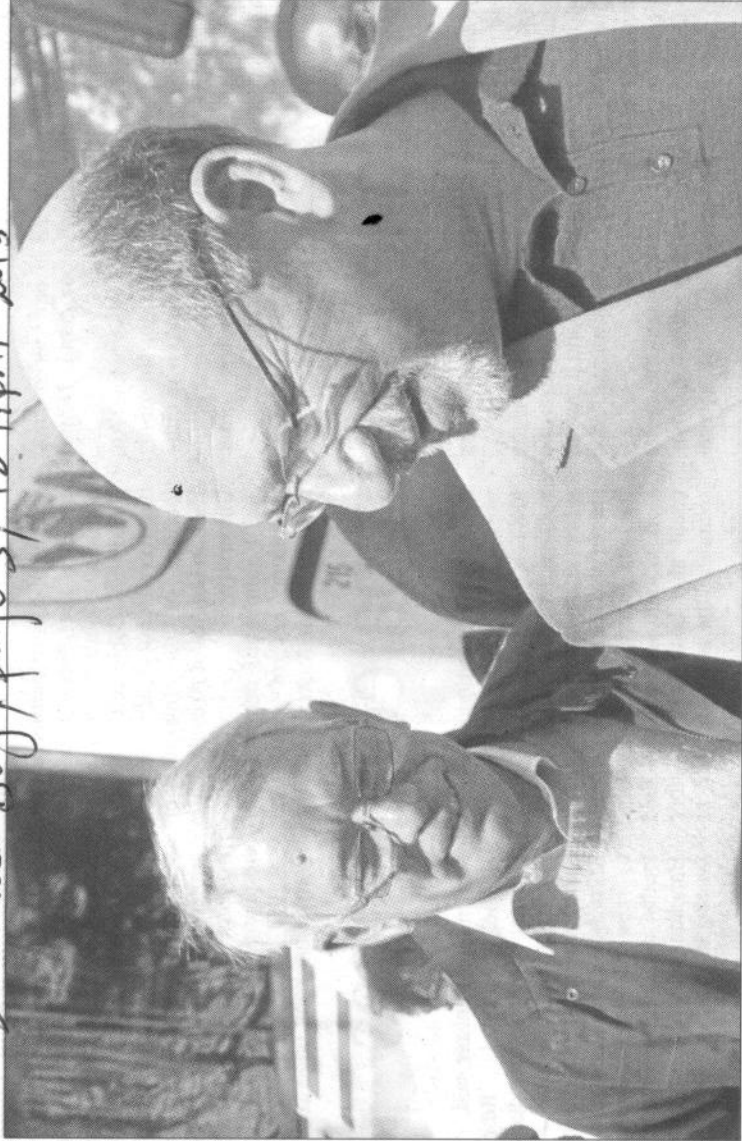
union criticism of the NDP that the 'diagnostic analysis' underpinning the plan's proposals is often not a diagnosis so much as a description of well-known symptoms".

The National Union of Metalworkers of SA and the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union have launched scathing attacks on Mr Manuel and the plan. As a federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) will next month consider an internal discussion paper, produced by its secretariat, which says the plan is not radical enough.

African National Congress (ANC) deputy secretary-general Jessie Duarte last week cautioned critics of Mr Manuel, saying careless attacks could erode the plan's credibility.

Mr Cronin said chapter 13 of the plan "quite correctly expresses concern around corruption, the lack of a work ethic, patronage networks in government, and many other problems. It notes in passing, for instance, that 'Provinces that incorporated substantial former homelands consistently perform worse than others'".

"If chapter 13 of the NDP had pursued a fuller diagnostic analysis of our actual South African reality it might have noted, for instance, that in 1994 almost 650,000 civil



RESPONSIBILITY: Jeremy Cronin, left, yesterday took a stab at the National Development Plan, produced under Trevor Manuel's guidance, saying it was not 'not written in stone'. Picture: SUNDAY TIMES

servants from the former Bantustans were incorporated into the new public service."

He said the NDP acknowledged further". Mr Manuel opened a can of

worms last week with his comments that leaders and public servants should not just blame apartheid.

He told the 2013 Government

Leadership Summit in Pretoria: "We should no longer say it's apartheid's fault. We should get up every morning and recognise that we have responsibility. There's no Botha regime looking over our shoulder, we are responsible ourselves."

In a brief interview yesterday, Mr Cronin said the fact 650,000 public servants — some of them poorly trained — were absorbed from Bantustan governments was one of the sources of underperformance.

"This kind of legacy is insufficiently analysed in the NDP, and it was insufficiently considered back in the mid-1990s when the ANC-led government set about public administration transformation".

Mr Cronin said some of the deeper public service problems were caused by the democratic government's failed attempts to change and improve the public administration. In the early stages of the first decade of democracy, the state's strategy included bringing in "generic MBA-type managerialist directors" to replace sectoral professionals.

"This was the approach that was mechanically applied to public-sector reform in SA in the mid-1990s with disastrous consequences," Mr Cronin wrote in Umsebenzi, the SACP online newsletter.

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