



PEOPLE POWER: Members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, which is affiliated to Cosatu, gather to hear their general secretary, Irvin Jim, explain the National Development Plan and attack the government over its proposals. PHOTO MOHAU MOFOKENG

MANUEL AND CRONIN 'SNUB' COSATU FORUM

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PLANNING Minister Trevor Manuel and SA Communist Party deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin yesterday apparently snubbed Cosatu's socialist forum where they were due to debate the government's National Development Plan.

This gave National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) boss Irvin Jim - who appeared to be ready for war - the upper hand. He was the lone voice on a makeshift podium, attacking the government for its adoption of the NDP, which he said was a product of the Democratic Alliance.

Manuel and Cronin had supposedly confirmed their availability for the event.

Their no-show did not dampen spirits, with those present singing, with Jim in the lead, and dancing before sitting quietly to give their undivided attention.

No-show gives Numsa upper hand

Jim spoke about the importance of unity but added that Cosatu had not been as vocal on the NDP issue as Numsa had.

Jim used an overhead projector to show Cosatu members striking similarities between contents of the NDP and the DA economic policies, and then questioned why the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was being attacked for not supporting a DA product.

When proceedings began, Gauteng Numsa provincial secretary Dumisani Dakile explained to the delegates that Cronin and Manuel had confirmed attendance after receiving invitations as early as March 28 to come and give their perspectives on the NDP.

"We were told not to worry and that everything was sorted, even on Friday when we followed up," said Dakile,

adding the two had not even phoned.

But Cronin said yesterday he had never received any such invitation.

Conflict has been raging between the men in recent months.

Jim has lashed out at Cronin, charging that he wanted to pit Numsa against other affiliates of Cosatu.

The spat between Jim and Cronin started when Cronin implied two weeks ago that Numsa's central committee meeting statement showed a lack of solidarity to NUM in relation to the death of miners at Lonmin's Marikana mine last year.

It is not the first time these two find themselves at loggerheads. Last year, Jim accused Cronin and other SACP leaders of being confused as they are "embedded in the state". This was over their stance on e-tolling.

Manuel's apparent snubbing of the

event yesterday comes soon after a public spat between himself and Jim, whom he said was suffering from an infantile disorder that made him averse to anything rational.

Numsa argued that the NDP is a "right-wing" document and does not provide a plan on how to transform the economy in line with the Freedom Charter objectives. Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi has since also joined the fray, saying it was no different to the Growth, Empowerment and Redistribution policy.

Meanwhile, Jim took a jab at President Jacob Zuma about his comment that the problem in the country was that everyone wanted to govern. This was in reference to criticism about the deployment of soldiers in the Central African Republic. Jim said Zuma was clearly defying the Freedom Charter which states the people shall govern.

"No government can claim authority without it being based on the will of the people," he said.