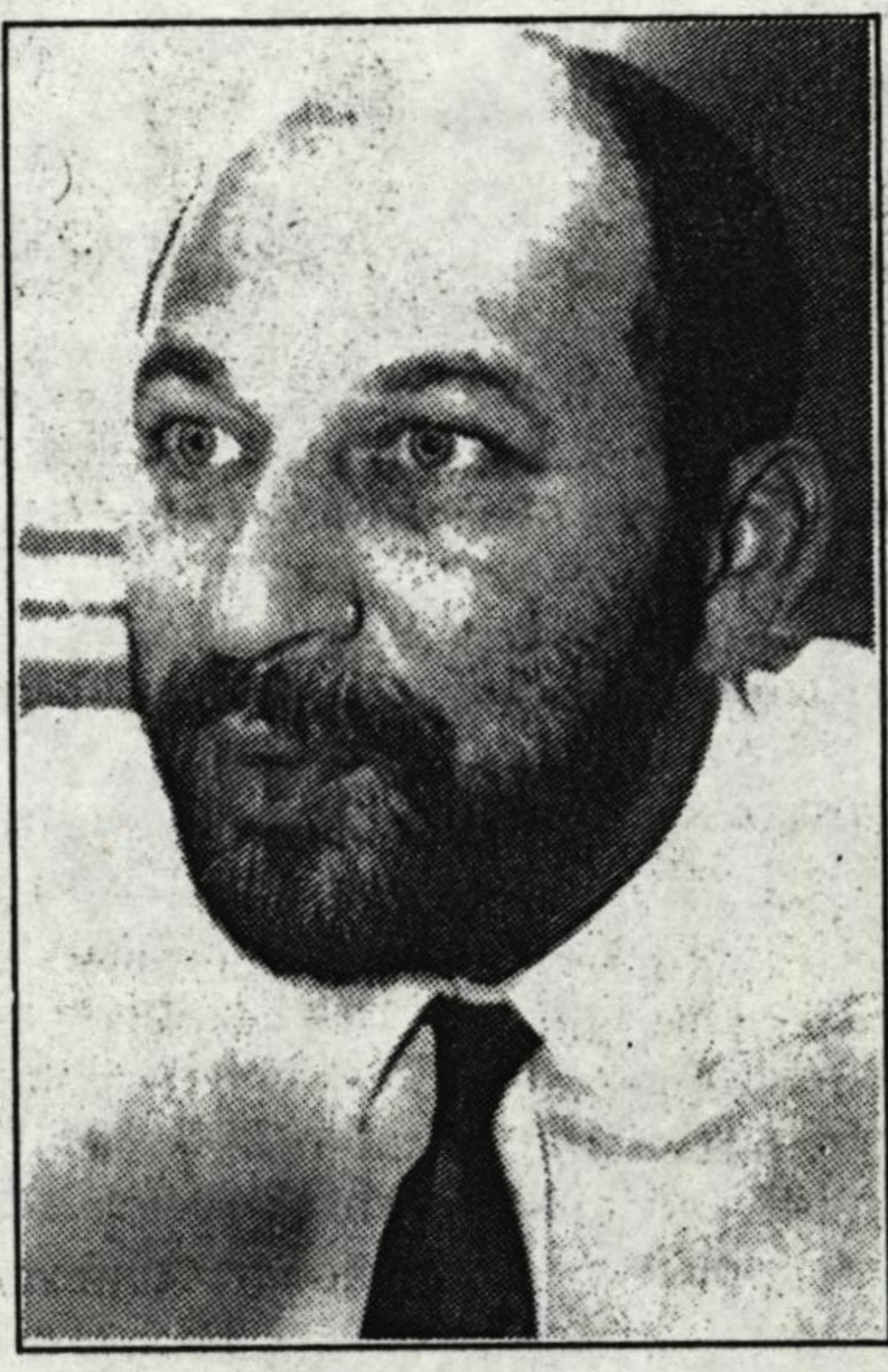


face the **Nation**

# Moving towards a people's economy

**When a new democratic government takes over from the current administration it will be faced with enormous social and economic demands from its constituency. How it plans to address those demands remains to be seen. *face the Nation* speaks with Trevor Manuel, head of the ANC's economic planning unit, who argues that an economic reconstruction programme is needed and that the trade union movement will have to redefine its role when an ANC-dominated government is in power.**



Trade unions and civic organisations have called for the signing of a Reconstruction Accord that would be binding on the government during the transition period. What are some of the immediate social and economic constraints that the ANC would face when implementing such an accord?

The Reconstruction Accord needs to be drafted and implemented by both the state and organs of civil society. It is incorrect to believe that different organs of civil society would draft a reconstruction accord and say "we want this accord to be implemented" and expect the next government to implement it without their participation. We do not want to see the role of civil society confined to making demands and the state having to deliver or not deliver. That is not the basis on which a democratic government can proceed.

I have been misunderstood by different people about the role that I believe civil society has to play in policy formulation. The primary issue is how to make participatory democracy work in South Africa.

There is a substantial need for more housing in the country - roughly 1.5 million units. Budget allocation for housing under the current regime is underfunded. But as we proceed with the reconstruction programme, the democratic state will not be able to deliver the 1.5 million houses within a reasonable time. We need creative interaction between the state and the private sector. At the moment the private sector does not want to invest in housing because they would say "the South African National Civic Organisation (Sanco) will call a bond boycott". But as part of the reconstruction, we will need an input from Sanco on how many houses are needed and where they should be built.

One of the important points for reconstruction, therefore, is not to have national structures such as the National Housing Forum (NHF), because they would not mean a lot to people who live in Khayelitsha or Phola Park. The NHF is too remote from where the people are. We should instead have small local and regional forums. But we need to be careful not to have thousands of forums all talking a different language, making different demands and having different expectations. It will not be easy on the new government. If Sanco, for example, demands a certain amount of houses to be built in a certain area, they cannot make these demands and fold their arms and expect the government to deliver. They have to be actively involved in the allocation of those houses without favouring a particular group against another. It is therefore not the democratic state that should be held solely accountable for development - the organs of civil society must be accountable as well.

But do you think the ANC should sign a reconstruction accord now before a new government takes over the country?

I do not think it is a question of signing the accord. I think the emphasis should be on participation. The ANC must lead the process in which the reconstruction programme is drawn up because we are talking of a different kind of government where democracy will accrue from the masses by way of improvements in the quality of their lives. We have to be careful not to run the risk of cheap electioneering. The easiest thing in the world is to get up on a platform in the run-up to the election and say "vote for us and we will do this and that for you". That is cheap and anti-democratic behaviour. What is difficult is to stand on the platform and say "comrades - we are in this together". The pace of reconstruction will be slower than what most of us will want to see.

**The ANC constituency runs across different classes in the country, from the unemployed living in the squatter camps to owners of big businesses. Do you think some of the expectations people have could result in class conflict?**

I think in a society that is highly unequal like ours, caste or class conflict is inevitable. We need a situation where we can convince the majority of South Africans that programmes which would address the aspirations of the poorest and most marginalised people in the country are necessary. That is where our challenge lies. I think what people want is transparency in the way decisions are taken.

If we mystify the way economic issues are taken we create an impression that the government can just print money and can build one million houses in a year. Unemployed people might also have an impression that they can get a job two weeks after a new government comes in. As long as economic issues are mystified, you create the basis for an unstable society. We need to do is to demystify the principles of economic management. We can only do so through the communication of civil society. It is the best way to manage what is a difficult situation. Any analysis of the ANC's policy programmes will show that we want to lean unashamedly in favour of the poorest in society.

**Do you feel there is a need for a reconstruction levy to help poor communities in the country?**

When the issue of having a reconstruction levy was first raised it was meant to test opinions in the country. It is not unusual for a new government in any country to have some form of levy for reconstruction. The problem in this country is that whites want to retain the status quo. They believe that someone out there should contribute towards their social stability.

reconstruction levy would be in the overall interests of stability in the country. Germany utilised these levies after World War II.

The key challenge is to fund a good reconstruction programme. There are a variety of sources from which to fund reconstruction programmes. The first important source is the budget. The current budget has to be scrapped because it does not address the needs of the majority of the people. The second source would involve savings in the country such as insurance, pension and provident funds. We need to shift the bulk of the money into social goods and services, including investment in industries to create more jobs. We will certainly need foreign donor aid but not from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank (WB) but from countries who want to consciously make a contribution towards democracy and reconstruction. That money would have to be managed properly because it only comes once.

**Recently you have gone on record as saying that in a new dispensation organised labour would be limited as far as macro-economic issues are concerned. Do you think the labour movement does not have an important role to play in macro-economic issues?**

The ANC policy guidelines states very clearly that the democratic state would have the ultimate responsibility - in co-operation with the trade unions and other

organs of civil society - in co-ordinating and guiding the development of the economy. Emphasis would be placed on macro-economic policy issues such as price stability and the balance of payments. That is roughly what our policy guidelines say and that is what I stand by. It is not something that I made up.

The democratic state is something that we have fought for and sacrificed our lives for. It remains the final arbiter of macro-economic policies. However, we are saying organisations like the National Economic Forum (NEF) or the Social Accord would be important. They must have a persuasive influence on the way macro-economic policies are implemented. But at the end of the day, the democratic state cannot stand back and fold its arms and say let business and labour decide on macro-economic policies. They certainly have a vested interest in the economy. But, given the nature of the democracy we want to construct in this country, the democratic state must be held accountable on macro-economic issues. Not only elected representatives, but civil servants as well.

What I'm saying is not in contradiction with our policy at all. Trade unions have a high political profile at the moment because of the current undemocratic, unrepresentative and illegitimate government. As we proceed to change the nature of government at all levels the trade unions need to show an interest not only in their members alone - they must fully participate in social and economic reconstruction.

**Are you suggesting that trade unions should reconsider their role in the next government?**

That would change in the course of events. They need to change their up-front political role which they have played for years. But I'm not saying they cannot play a certain political role. If the reconstruction programme we envisage goes according to plan, we will have a vibrant economy and we will need the trade unions and other organs of the civil society.

Their inputs on macro-economic issues would have to be persuasive, unlike the situation we have had with the current undemocratic government.

**You have expressed reservations about the National Party's (NP) participation in the NEF in policy formulation. Are you suggesting that the NEF does not have legitimacy or that it should be broadened into an economic Codesa?**

I'm not suggesting there is need for an economic Codesa. If you have 26 parties participating in the NEF we will end up with a circus. I do not know what contribution (Brigadier) Oupa Qgozo (military ruler of the Ciskei), for instance, can make on macro-economic issues. He would merely cause confusion in the forum.

The danger is that we can't make economic policies for the coming years with a dying government. You will be giving them power that they do not deserve. One cannot expect this government to take an interest in long-term economic issues. De Klerk last week said he would soon borrow some money from the IMF. I would question whether the IMF should be entering into a lending programme with a government that does not have a future. The risk is that the government may decide on borrowing that would tie up the democratic state and leave us with a structural adjustment programme that would weaken our ability to deliver to the people what had been promised.

They want people to say that we cannot deliver what we promised and that the white minority government was better. This is not to dispute that the contingency facilities that they are going for - such as low-interest rates for instance - are not a better deal. But we need to be careful in the way we borrow. We do not need to give the De Klerk administration power they don't deserve. They are on the way out. We are dealing with a government that does not have a tomorrow - only a bad yesterday.

## Sexually speaking

Dr Jon continues his discussion of contraception:

Muriel hadn't had a period for two months but she was sure she couldn't be pregnant because she was on the "injection". I examined her and did a pregnancy test. She was not pregnant.

The contraceptive injection probably caused her periods to stop temporarily. She'd been on one called "Depo" for a full year and had been bleeding less, and for fewer days each time she menstruated since she started receiving the injection. Every three months she went back to the clinic for it. She didn't understand how it worked. It was a bit painful for about a day afterwards, but she preferred it because her boyfriend didn't know.

Two kinds of contraceptives injection are available. Muriel gets "Depo Provera" every twelve weeks. The other is "Nur-Isterate" - given every eight weeks. Both work in the same way, and both are very effective.

They can be used if a woman is breastfeeding. They can also be used if a woman has to take certain TB treatments, epilepsy treatment, or if she drinks a lot of alcohol.

They work by making the little plug

## Your sex advice column from Dr Jon

of mucus in the mouth of the womb (the cervix) thicker - so sperm cells cannot get through.

Muriel wanted to know if problems would develop because of not having her periods. She thought the blood must be "stuck" somewhere in her body - and it would make her sick. I explained that she wasn't having her periods because the injection makes the lining of the womb (the endometrium) very thin. This is another way that the injections work: a baby cannot start growing in the very thin lining. But this means there may be no blood, or very little blood when her period comes. I suggested she try the other injection.

Some disadvantages of the contraceptive injections are:

- It may cause weight gain, often three to four kilograms;
- both injections, but especially Depo Provera, may cause the woman's periods to be irregular. Like Muriel they could even stop altogether. It could however, cause other women to bleed more heavily during, and even between, their periods.
- Sometimes it takes a long time for a woman to become pregnant after she's stopped taking the injection. This

is a bigger problem with Depo Provera.

The injections are a good form of contraception for women who've completed their families, but are reluctant to be sterilized.

Many people think young girls should not be given the injection because there may be a delay in falling pregnant afterwards. A woman who's planning to become pregnant within the following two years, may also prefer not to use it.

In many countries, people in power, and unethical health workers, have used the injection to control women's fertility.

In South Africa, women were often given the injection without really understanding how it works, or why. Many women were given the injection immediately after the delivery of a baby without their consent. These are abuses of a woman's right to control her own fertility.

The injection is an effective form of contraception for many women but for other women it causes unacceptable side effects.

Next week I will discuss the "pill".

*Dr Jon*