Mbeki biographer's complaint dismissed

JOHANNESBURG: The press ombudsman has dismissed a complaint from author Ronald Suresh Roberts over a story that *The Weekender* published on accusations of plagiarism levelled at him by another author.

In its November 17/18 issue last year, the article headlined, "Authors in plagiarism war", discussed allegations that Roberts had plagiarised work from Anthony Brink's Lying and Thieving in his biography of President Thabo Mbeki titled, "Fit to Govern: The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki."

ROBERTS

Roberts complained that there were factual errors in the main story and that the newspaper had not given him the chance to respond; a graphic accompanying the story carried Brink's allegations but not Roberts's responses; and that

the newspaper's poster, "Suresh Roberts caught cribbing", elevated Brink's allegations to the status of fact.

Brink alleged that Roberts had "cut and pasted" sections on HIV/Aids from his work.

Weekender editor Peter Bruce had e-mailed 10 samples of the alleged plagiarism to Roberts the day before publication, and had used five of the examples in the graphic. Roberts had not met

the deadline for the graphic, and so his responses were not included in it. Some were, however, included in the report.

The only inaccuracy the ombudsman found in the report was that Brink had introduced lawyer Christine Qunta and Roberts, when in fact he had not. The panel found this to be a "minor mistake that did not reflect badly on Roberts". – Sapa