

Sash Defended in Parliament

Meetings and Demonstrations Affected

WHEN the clause of the General Law Amendment Bill dealing with intimidation and placing of onus of proof of innocence on the accused was debated in the Senate, Senator Mitchell (U.P.) said that as the clause was framed it would make any peaceful and innocuous demonstration, such as was often made by the Black Sash movement, an offence.

He hoped it was not the intention to take action against the Black Sash in terms of this clause. If it were, Mr. Erasmus should say so clearly.

The Minister said he failed to understand in what way the Black Sash movement could be used as an example. Would members of the Black Sash taking part in a silent demonstration be regarded as the intimidators or as the intimidated?

Intimidation

The key to the clause dealing with intimidation and intimidators was that there must be compulsion on the part of the intimidator. The Black Sash movement did not come into the picture as they were not intimidating anybody and were themselves not being intimidated. Senator Mitchell said Mr.

Erasmus might not have intended that the provision should be applicable to the Black Sash, but as the clause stood it would be advisable to go into the matter again and make sure about the legal position.

On the following day the Sash was refused permission to hold a stand of 12 members at the top of Adderley Street. In order to comply with the law the stand took place with only one Sasher, relieved every half-hour by another. A poster stated: "Justice demands a National Convention of all Races." Several pedestrians passed remarks — not all of them favourable. One of the Sashers was asked why she did not have a good sleep—six feet under. Another was harangued at length in Afrikaans by a woman in royal purple who accused the Sash of helping to encourage violence and bloodshed. "Go to the Church next door," she said, "get on your bended knees and thank God for Dr. Verwoerd." A bystander afterwards congratulated the Sasher on the self-control she had exhibited.

There was entertainment, too, in the antics of a Coloured man commanding an imaginary platoon. But it was the police who provided the major diversion. They kept coming and going, determined to

