

right. Conservative Party spokesmen opposed the devolution of certain authorities from the State President towards the Minister on the grounds that in the new constitutional set-up the future Minister might be a coloured or Indian person.

A fourth theme involved strike action. Clause 26 of the Bill repeats the old 28 bis of the 1960 Act which prohibits an employee or anybody else from initiating or taking part in a strike. The maximum penalty was set at R200 or a year's imprisonment, or imprisonment without the option of a fine, or both. PFP warnings that a blanket refusal to allow strikes was a denial of basic rights was dismissed by Government speakers who emphasised that SATS remained a strategic organisation.

A final theme to emerge was Schoeman's attitude to the General Workers Union; at one point he referred to them by implication as 'communist labour unions' and other Government speakers accused the PFP of having become 'mouthpieces of leftist radical trade unions' and siding with the GWU against SATS. On the recognition issue Schoeman claimed that if he recognised the GWU the other staff associations might say they were being rendered helpless: 'Let us preferably make our own trade unions stronger'.

Opposition comment on the Bill was that it was anachronistic in its conciliation machinery, and the SATS Victorian in its industrial relations — as highlighted by the GWU strike. Schoeman unabashedly explained his motivation:

'Those who went on strike were paid off. I am not going to alter the terms of the legislation; I want to keep power in terms of the legislation.'

(C.T. correspondent, March '83)

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## Poverty in the Boland

The recession is taking its toll in the Western and South Western Cape, where more than 5,000 canning workers have lost their jobs in the past two years. In the Boland towns of Paarl and Wellington alone, more than 2,000 workers, previously employed in the industry, are now jobless. According to figures compiled by the Food and Canning Workers' Union (FCWU), which represents the majority of canning workers in the Cape, there were about 15,000 workers employed at the peak of season in

February 1981. In February last year there were about 10,000. The union expects the 1983 peak figure to be 'substantially less'. The number of factories operating in the Western Cape has decreased from 15 in 1979 to nine this year.

The fruit and vegetable canning industry is classified as 'seasonal' by the Minister of Manpower and workers who work less than eight months are not entitled to unemployment benefits. Most workers in the industry work for about five months of the year. The FCWU have said they are angry that there are no social security provisions for people who have 'given years of their lives to make a substantial contribution to the industry and, in fact, the whole economy'.

In Wellington, 300 people, all of them women, many of them breadwinners with families, have been without work since the Oaklands canning factory closed down in April last year. One woman, who lives in the poverty-stricken and dusty township of Hillcrest, about 10 kilometres outside Wellington, worked for the canning factories for 15 years before retiring three years ago. She says there is 'no chance' of unemployment benefits for the canning workers: 'People look for work in Franschoek or they go and char for the whites in Wellington'. Others say: 'There is no work in Wellington. We have to eat every day, we have to wear clothes. Our children are in school and they're always hungry. Life is hard here in the Boland with no work'.

Some have husbands, daughters and sons working in other factories in the area, or as domestics. Many others have no-one else to rely on. Few women charring in the white towns of Wellington and Franschoek earn above R2 a day. Looking for work is an expensive business. A bus ride to Wellington costs 33 cents. A train journey to Paarl is R1,28 return. The train to Cape Town costs R1,20 for a single ticket. Most of the women say they cannot afford to go so far to look for work. Rents in Hillcrest range from about R3 a week to about R4,50 for three-roomed houses without electricity. 'There's no place to live if you get thrown out', said a woman who hasn't been able to find work since Oaklands closed down last year.

As the downward turn in the economy continues, the chances of the women finding jobs in the near future, particularly in the canning industry, looks slim. Some relief would be provided if the women were entitled to draw unemployment benefits, they say. A local official of the Wellington branch of the Food and Canning Workers' Union said the union had passed a resolution at an annual conference 'some years ago', calling on the Minister of Manpower to enable canning workers to draw from the UIF. Union representatives also asked Dr Alex Boraine, MP and PFP spokesman on labour to raise the issue in parliament: 'We have tried

to talk about it, but nothing has yet come of it', said the union official.

The women of Mbekweni, the township outside Paarl, who were recently retrenched from one of the Langeberg factories, face a double obstacle in finding work in the Western Cape. Apart from the serious job shortage in the industry, the coloured labour preference policy imposes quotas on the number of African women employed in various industries. Textiles and canning are the only factories that will employ African women in the area. Like the Wellington workers, they too, are not entitled to unemployment benefits.

While canning employers complain of the collapse of the export market, and the entry of Greece into the EEC, which precipitated the crisis, thousands of workers sit in tiny houses all over the Western Cape, literally not knowing where their next meal is coming from.

(Western Cape correspondent, March '83)

## Detentions Hit Unions

The East London branch of SAAWU (South African Allied Workers' Union) has been the main target of a recent wave of detentions. Early on the morning of Wednesday 16th March six trade unionists were taken from Mdantsane township by police attached to the Ciskei 'homeland'.

Those detained are:

- Thozamile Gqweta — SAAWU national president
- Sisa Njikelana — SAAWU vice-president
- Bangumzi Sifingo — vice-chairman, Chloride workers committee
- Jeff Wabena — SAAWU organiser
- Humphrey Maxagwana - SAAWU organiser
- Sidney Mufamadi — general-secretary of GAWU

All except one are East London-based unionists. Mufamadi was visiting East London at the time of his detention. He is employed by the Johannesburg-based General and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU).

In a statement issued after the detentions SAAWU stated that it 'vehemently deplores this barbaric action. The detentions are clearly indicative of the intention to destroy SAAWU. Nevertheless all their attempts are an exercise in futility because nothing is going to deter us in