

over the strike, which began last Thursday.

Von Solms declines to comment on AECT's response to the union demands or on the merits of the union's case. "We will continue monitoring and improving our standards. We are discussing problems with employee representatives and will work out solutions with them," he says.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT Including blacks

The first steps towards including blacks as equal partners in local government were taken with the tabling in Parliament last week of the Promotion of Local Government Affairs Amendment Bill.

The Bill broadens the statutory definition of "local authority" to include black local government institutions such as independent local authorities, community councils and the development boards.

In addition, membership of the Council for the Co-ordination of Local Government Affairs — an important planning body involved in mapping out government's constitutional guidelines — is also extended. The legislation proposes the inclusion of at least three direct representatives of the black local authorities, as well as the Minister of Co-operation, Development and Education (Gerrit Viljoen), and the Local Government Ministers in each of the three Houses of Parliament.

This Bill is an important forerunner of the new Regional Services Councils (RSCs) through which power, including some taxation authority, will be devolved from the central to the local level. The inclusion of

blacks in the council means that they will be involved from the start in drawing up legislation controlling the RSCs, which are due to come into existence in July.

The FM has been told that in a bid to streamline the process, two enabling pieces of legislation are to be combined into one. Constitutional Development and Planning Minister Chris Heunis's Regional Services Council Bill is to be merged with draft legislation empowering the RSCs to levy taxes at the local level. The authority to impose the controversial levies was to have been encompassed in a separate finance Bill dealing with "Additional Sources of Revenue for Local Authorities."

The proposed levies — which have been sharply attacked by business — include a tax on wages and salaries and a surcharge on gst or a levy on floor space for concerns which do not collect gst. Details were announced by Heunis shortly before Christmas.

TRADE UNIONS Help from Germany

Closer links should be forged between emerging SA trade unions and their West German and international counterparts following last week's fact-finding visit to the Republic of a high-power delegation from the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB).

The delegation was headed by Ernst Breit, president of the 7.9m-member DGB which is an umbrella organisation for the 17 industrial unions in the Federal Republic of Germany and the third largest national union body in the West. Breit is also vice-president of the European Trade Union Confederation which has 40m members, vice-president of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) which is the largest international non-communist union body, and a member of Germany's Social Democratic Party.

SA unions have a long history of links with overseas unions. The Council of Unions of SA (Cusa) is affiliated to the ICFTU with which the Federation of SA Trade Unions (Fosatu) also has ties, although without being a fully fledged member. In recent years, individual DGB unions have developed good relationships with SA unions — especially in the automobile manufacturing, metal and chemical sectors. The DGB, however, does not give direct aid to SA unions. Aid, however, is channelled through ICFTU and individual DGB unions.

The idea for this visit was first proposed at a DGF-hosted meeting of the ICFTU in Dusseldorf, Germany, in January last year which was attended by a number of leading SA unionists.

Besides holding talks with SA unionists the delegation also visited the Siemens Watloo factory and Volkswagen's Port Elizabeth plant. Contact was made with the

SA Chamber of Commerce in which the attitudes of German companies operating in SA towards industrial relations and unions and the EEC code of employment were noted.

According to the labour attaché at the German embassy in SA local unions obtained no promises of individual aid. But it seems that a number of unions are looking for expert help in the areas of education and occupational health.

Says the labour attaché: "The commitment to SA unions was there before this trip and will continue as defined by the needs of the unions. The trip helped the DGB and the ICFTU to find a better definition of their role towards the emerging unions. The ICFTU has committed itself to SA — not only by giving assistance but by generating a better understanding of the situation in SA. SA is sure to come up as a subject for discussion at a coming meeting in Washington in March."

On the disinvestment issue the delegation came to the conclusion that it has put "useful" pressure for change on the SA government and that it should be pursued. However, it was also recognised that disinvestment would have a negative effect at the shop floor level.

SATS PAY The freeze applies

Railway trade unions have accepted — for the moment at least — that there will be no annual salary increase this year. This settles the uncertainty about whether the public sector pay freeze applies to the SA Transport Services (Sats).

The freeze will delay implementation of

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OPEN TRADING DELAY

Non-racial trading areas are coming — but not yet. That is the essence of Constitutional Development and Planning Minister Chris Heunis's statement in Parliament last week. It seems the whole issue is mired in bureaucratic procedures that do not permit haste.

Thus, says Heunis: "Free trade areas in terms of Section 19 will still have to be identified, advertised and investigated by the Group Areas Board." What this seems to mean is that they will come into existence in 1986, perhaps, and not in July this year as had been expected.

In addition, says Heunis, the Group Areas Amendment Act "does not in itself imply that all business areas within towns or cities will be open to all races automatically."

This clarification follows confusion triggered by an announcement by Heunis earlier this month that the amended Act would apply "automatically in those free trade areas as stipulated in Section 19 of the Amendment Act."



Schoeman ... no budgetary provision for pay increases