

# Spar strike

## drags on

**T**he three-month old strike by approximately 4 000 Spar workers continues. The strike started on 9 November when SACCAWU members from about 240 stores in the Gauteng province downed tools. The workers were demanding centralised bargaining and the reinstatement of colleagues fired for having attended president Nelson Mandela's inauguration on 10 May last year.

SACCAWU has asked the labour ministry to intervene. According to SACCAWU's Sthembele Tshwete, most Spar employers are ignorant about centralised bargaining. "They are just union bashers who have no perception of what our demand for centralised bargaining means." Tshwete said the ministry's intervention would revolve around convincing employers to submit to voluntary mediation.

Since the strike started, employers have been granted at least 48 court interdicts. A common feature of these interdicts is the barring of workers from picketing within 500 metres of Spar supermarkets. At least 500 workers have been arrested for breaking the terms of the interdicts. Many of the arrested workers were charged with trespassing.

SACCAWU said the union had paid R600 000 in bail to keep members out of jail. According to SACCAWU, all the arrested workers had bail set at over R700 each, and one worker was granted bail of R8 000. A union delegation met with Supreme Court prosecutors to voice the union's dissatisfaction about the high bail.

Tshwete said the union is convinced that elements within the judicial system are bent on criminalising industrial action and crush-

ing unions. "We were never given enough time, if at all, to respond to the applications by employers before the interdicts were granted."

Tshwete said all the striking workers have been dismissed. However, he said the union is confident that the dispute would be resolved shortly. "We have been lobbying other employers and consultants to put pressure on the Spar employers to enter into negotiations about our demands."

Tshwete said the storming of the Greek consulate in Johannesburg by people purporting to be SACCAWU members was not discussed in the union. "We condemn this kind of action and we are investigating the matter."

A consumer boycott of Spar supermarkets called by SACCAWU and endorsed by COSATU is effective mainly in the townships, according to Tshwete. However, one problem was that white consumers were not sympathetic to workers' struggles. Tshwete added that SACCAWU had met with black Spar employers and they understood the union's demands. "We told them to talk to their white friends and show them the need to meet our demands." However, he said the black employers comprise only about 2% of Spar employers.

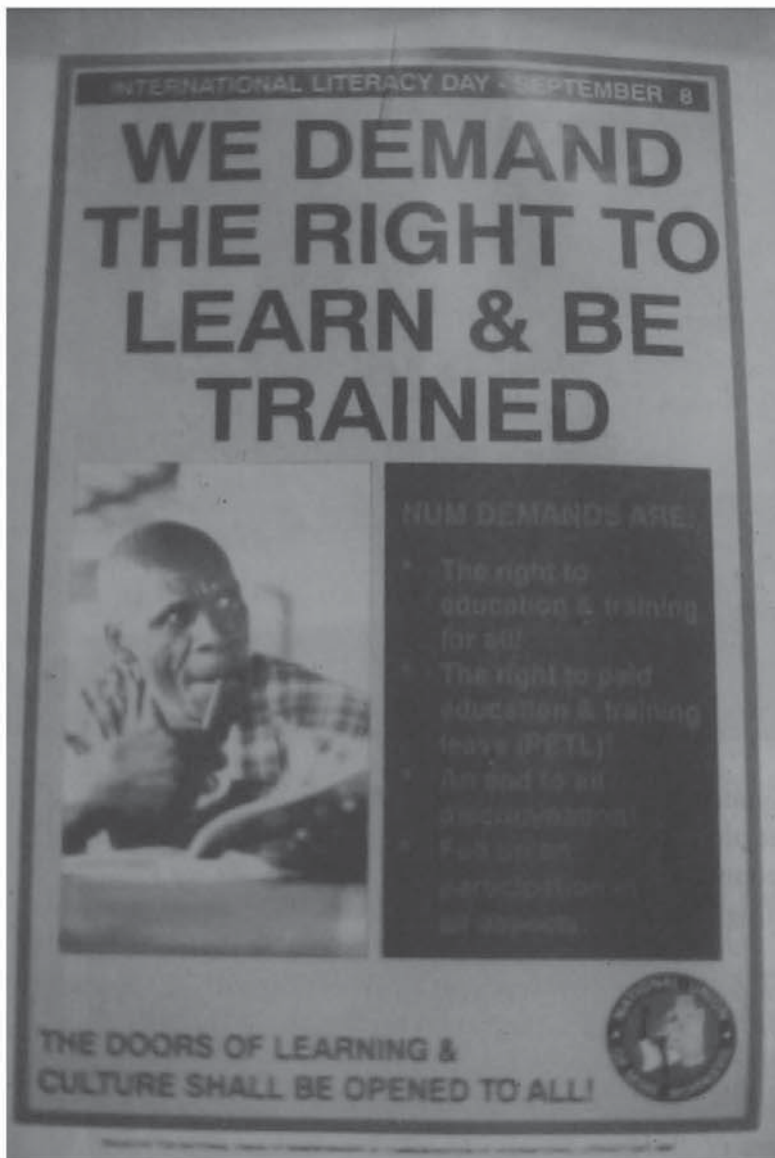
*(Zolile Mtshelwane)*

The strike took a dramatic turn on 13 February when 300 striking workers stormed a Spar supermarket in Eloff Street, Johannesburg. Management called police, who fired teargas into the store, causing a stampede in which at least seven workers were injured. A large group of workers were arrested.

During the stampede, workers trashed the store overturning shelves and throwing objects at the police. There were reports of white police manhandling workers, which led to a heated exchange of words between black and white policemen.

It was reported that more 300 of the arrested workers escaped from a holding cell at John Vorster Square police Station. The door of the cell was apparently left open by a policeman suspected of being sympathetic to the workers.

# Education leave dispute



**T**he NUM has declared a dispute with the Chamber of Mines over paid education and training leave (PETL). The dispute centres around the Chamber's insistence that PETL should be negotiated at mine level, rather than at industry level as demanded by the union.

The NUM is demanding PETL of 200 hours per year. This would include trade union education as well as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET).

In 1993 the union and the Chamber established a working party whose main task was to develop a framework for the industry on

ABET and PETL. However, the Chamber informed the NUM in January this year of its intention to disband this working party.

The NUM argued that the Chamber is negotiating in bad faith, and has referred the dispute to the conciliation board. The NUM said the working party has not discharged its responsibility of developing a framework.

The union said the practice of PETL is well established in the mining and energy industries. However, supervisors and management preferences still determine who should attend training courses.

□ Meanwhile, about 215 delegates attended the NUM's 4th national education and training conference from January 18 to 21 in Bronkhorstspuit. The theme of the conference was "Education and Training: The key to worker empowerment and the RDP".

Delegates broke into 11 commissions dealing with different aspects of the conference's theme.

The commission dealing with the strengthening of branch and regional education resolved that each of the union's mine branches should have full-time educators who will be paid by employers. This would create a core education and training cadreship of approximately 400 workers.

The new slogan the union will use in this will be: One branch, one educator. The conference also decided to campaign for educators to be accredited as "Adult Educators", so that their skills would be transferrable to other mines and adult education centres.

*(Zolile Mtshelwane)*

# Sewing to make ends meet

**T**huso Bathong ("help to the people") is a sewing project aimed at wives of returned exiles and unemployed women from squatter communities. The project was started in November 1991 by Matla Trust.

Project co-ordinator Flesher Matsheka says six trainees are taken in for a period of three months. They are taught how to operate a sewing machine, pattern-making and cutting as well as the economical use of materials.

The project works closely with the ANC's social welfare department in selecting three returnees' wives to do the course. Another three trainees are nominated by Thusanang, a women's development project operating in squatter settlements around Gauteng. "Our main criterion for selecting students is talent."

The project has so far trained 13 groups, which means more than 70 women have passed through the course. The students receive a certificate after completing the course. Matsheka and her colleague were students from the project's first group.

Although the students' completed work looks good, Matsheka said it is not sold outside of Matla Trust. "The work is not of such high quality that we can sell it. Secondly, we have not yet developed a market to which we can sell."

Matsheka is hopeful, though. "From this year, we plan to teach students to make more household items such as bedding material, throw-overs and curtains. These have proved to be popular amongst staff at Matla Trust and sell very fast."

The students are enthusiastic: "When I complete the course at the end of January, I will have a skill I never had before I came

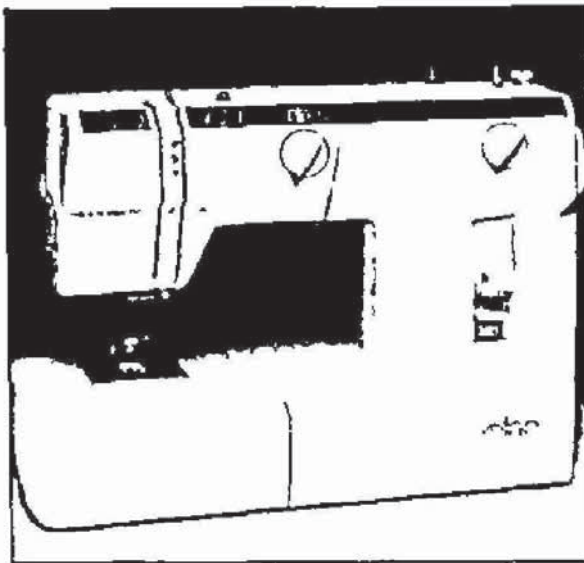


here," says Sibongile from Diepkloof, Soweto. However, Matsheka and her students have a common anxiety — jobs are scarce. Matsheka says that some former students were unable to get Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) loans to start their own businesses. "The SBDC would not give them loans because of their lack of business skills."

Matsheka has a dream. "I would like to see the project occupying a bigger space. This would allow us to double the number of students we take in at a time. My biggest wish is to be able to find jobs for all those women who complete the course. Perhaps one day we can start a centre where all our former students can work as a collective."

*(Zolile Mtshelwane)*

**Readers of the SA Labour Bulletin have the chance to win an Elna sewing machine worth R899! See competition details on the opposite page.**



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## Inflation monitor: November and December 1994

Area	Consumer Price Index (1990 = 100)		Annual rate of inflation (% increase over 1 year)	
	November	December	November	December
<i>Cape Peninsula</i>	165,4	165,9	10,3%	10,4%
<i>PE/Uitenhage</i>	163,5	163,4	10,8%	10,3%
<i>East London</i>	164,1	163,9	10,4%	9,8%
<i>Kimberley</i>	165,8	166,3	10,5%	10,6%
<i>PMB</i>	164,4	165,3	9,7%	10,0%
<i>Dbn/Pinetown</i>	158,8	159,1	9,3%	9,2%
<i>Pta/Verwoerdburg/ Akasia</i>	163,7	164,2	10,4%	10,3%
<i>Witwatersrand</i>	162,5	163,1	9,4%	9,6%
<i>Klerksdorp</i>	162,6	163,1	10,6%	10,7%
<i>Vaal Triangle</i>	154,1	154,7	8,3%	8,5%
<i>OFS Goldfields</i>	163,7	163,7	9,7%	9,4%
<i>Bloemfontein</i>	160,5	160,2	10,8%	10,5%
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b>	<b>162,8</b>	<b>163,3</b>	<b>9,9%</b>	<b>9,9%</b>

Source: Labour Research Service

# William Matlala

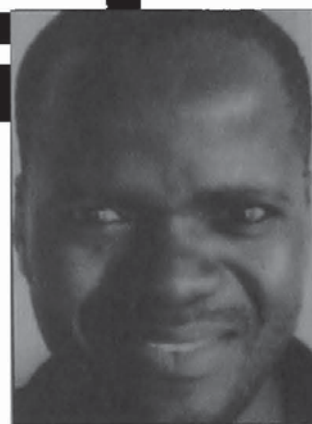
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