tions.

Although the pipeline project would seem attractive to Western governments and Arab producers who fear that violence in the Gulf region could hinder petroleum exports, the United States is apparently taking a hands-off approach to the TAPCO scheme. "We are aware of the TAPCO project," said one State Department spokesperson. "TAPCO officials have in the past briefed department and U.S. Embassy officials."

"Neither we nor the embassies have taken any position on the project, which is a private undertaking," she added. Other State Department officials said that Tsakos had not approached the United States for official funding or export credits for the project, which is customary in cases where U.S. companies undertake projects of this size. They added that they were not sure Saudi Arabia supported the effort.

At the Khartoum press conference on July 18, At-Tuhami and Tsakos said the pipeline will transport oil from Yanbu in Saudi Arabia to a new terminal in Port Sudan. From there the pipeline will turn south through Sudan and eventually run through the Central African Republic and Cameroon to the port of Douala on the Atlantic coast. But officials at Morrison Knudson International, a major U.S. construction firm, said the Saudis would commit nothing to the project until agreements were signed with the Central African Republic and Cameroon. Officials from the Cameroon and the Central African Republic embassies here refused to comment on the venture.

One TAPCO employee said she thought negotiations with the two governments were in "advanced stages."

Some analysts have questioned the viability of a 2,112-mile pipeline which could carry 80 per cent of Saudi Arabia's daily output through some of the roughest terrain in Africa. Nevertheless, officials at the Boise, Idaho-based Morrison Knudsen said their pre-feasibility study of the project was promising. "The project is technically feasible," said Dick Cohne of the company's international engineering office in San Francisco. "We have an eye towards building the pipeline," he said, adding that once the agreements are settled, a year-long

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SOUTH AFRICA

VOTING NEARS FOR NEW PARLIAMENT

[SNS] With pomp and ceremony South Africa's all-white parliament had its final session on July 13, to make way for a new tri-cameral legislative system.

The three-tier body, which opens in September, will consist of separate chambers, one each for Whites, "Coloureds" (those of mixed ancestry) and Indians.

The August 22 elections for the 80 seats in the Coloured House of Representatives are being contested by five parties—the Labour Party, the Peoples Congress Party, the Freedom Party, the Reformed Freedom Party and the New Convention Party.

Elections for the 40 seats in the Indian House of Representatives take place on Aug. 28, with three major parties registered to run: the National People's Party, the Solidarity Party and the Progressive Indian Party.

While these groups, plus a large number of independent candidates, are seeking votes, other organizations are pressing for a boycott of the entire process. Leading the campaign is the United Democratic Front (UDF), a non-racial alliance of over 600 organizations representing more than two million people.

The African Peoples Democratic Union of South Africa (Apdusa) has also opposed the constitutional scheme, and early last month the National Forum Committee (NFC), a black consciousness grouping, became the latest major organization to endorse the boycott.

Active anti-constitution committees have been set up country-wide, and various mass meetings and rallies are being held to demonstrate opposition to the upcoming elections.

Speaking at one of the mass meetings in Pietermaritzburg, in Natal, George Sewpersadh of the Natal Indian Congress, a UDF affiliate, said that the Indian community faces its greatest challenge ever. "If we accept the constitution it means we are prepared to leave out the majority of the people, and how can a foundation for peace be laid if most of the people are left out," he said.

"The new constitution can only lead to an increase in racial divisions and escalation in violence," he warned.

The election efforts of the participating parties are proving to be difficult, since most of their meetings have been disrupted by anti-constitution supporters. The Coloured Labour Party has become the main target for most of these demonstrations.

At a July 4 rally addressed by Labour Party leader Alan Hendrickse in Actonville in the Transvaal, riot police armed with batons and shotguns were called to restore order after violent clashes had left at least one man seriously injured and several others with minor injuries. Two opponents of the Labour Party were beaten to the ground by Reaction Unit police.

The special police Reaction Unit was also called in at a recent Labour Party meeting held in Bishop Lavis, near Cape Town. Several hundred anti-election supporters entered the hall despite heavy security and disrupted a rally in support of Nic Isaacs, the Labour Party's candidate for the township. After police intervention, less than 100 people remained to continue the meeting.

For Labour, the largest party contesting the elections, the campaign is proving a test of its previously-widespread grassroots popularity.

To boost its standing, the party mounted a challenge to the government's Prohibition of Political Interference Act by declaring itself a non-racial organization.

In defiance of the 1968 act, which prohibits multi-racial membership in parties as well as a wide range of cross-racial political activities, Labour opened its ranks to Whites and Indians, with the hope of being represented in all three chambers.

In keeping with the decision, the party's Transvaal branch elected prominent conservative Indian politician Salam Abram-Mayet to its executive in May. At the same congress, party leaders announced their intention to field Labour candidates in all the Transvaal province's seats for the Indian House of Delegates.

However, under pressure from the Pretoria government, the Labour Party announced last month that while it would contest some Indian seats, to avoid contravention of the act its candidates will run as nominal independents.

Meanwhile, the violence that erupted at the Labour Party's Actonville meeting has prompted Indian candidates to tread more warily. Dinkie Pillay of the Indian Solidarity Party has said his group will conduct its campaign by private house meetings, through the mail and by telephone.

The National People's Party's Amichand Rajbansi addressed a "by invitation only" election meeting near Pretoria on July 15 amid strict security.

—*Solidarity News Service* ■

AROUND THE CONTINENT

ECONOMY/SUCCESSION WORRY SIERRA LEONE

[AN] President Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone visited his doctors for a second time last month while on a short holiday in London, underscoring the question of who the country's next leader will be.

But uncertainty about the presidential transition and an intensifying rivalry among potential candidates are probably overshadowed for the public by concern over deteriorating economic conditions.

The country has experienced a long year of shortages and cutbacks, and the economic recession has affected every facet of life. Nearly half of Sierra Leone's foreign exchange earnings come from diamond and gold exports, and the steady loss of income from pervasive smuggling has sharply cut the country's reserves of hard currency.

Freetown, the capital, has experienced repeated blackouts because the currency shortage has precluded the import of spare parts for the King Tom power station.

Sierra Leone's agricultural sector has also been sharply hit by the economic crisis. The cost of rice, the country's staple diet, has doubled in the past months to about $36 per 110 pound bag and is expected to increase further as rice becomes more scarce during the rainy season.

Many economists blame the rice shortage on