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SOUTHERN AFRICAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

BANTU LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Statement issued to the press.

“The Conference of the Catholic Bishops of South Africa deeply regrets that the Government has judged it opportune to proceed with the Bantu Laws Amendment Bill, 1964. Although the Bill contains some provisions which are to the benefit of Africans, as, for instance, the protection given to Africans against malpractices (37), and the permission for re-entry to prescribed areas (38), the Bill as a whole, is an invasion of primary human rights, and the minor concessions it contains are deprived of any real value by the deadweight of restrictions under which they are buried.

The effect of the Bill would be to deprive seven million African citizens of a strict right to residence, movement and employment outside the Bantu areas; that is, in four-fifths of the entire Republic. It would strip the African of his basic freedom in the country of his birth, making him dependant upon the possession of a permit to explain his presence anywhere, and at any time, outside the “Bantu Homelands”. This is not consonant with any concept of the dignity of the human person.

This Conference fails to see how such a drastic curtailment of rights can be reconciled with natural justice and Christian charity. The Bill is a negation of social morality and Christian thinking, striking, as it does, at the basic Christian institution, the family, through its inflexible restriction of the individual. The Archbishops and Bishops of the Conference feel in conscience bound to join their voices with those of other Churches and Christian bodies in the Republic, in protest against the Bill.”