

## **SACBC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE STATEMENT REGARDING THE MEETING WITH THE MINISTER OF HEALTH (27/2/91)**

Today's meeting of a delegation representing health care concerns of the Roman Catholic Church with the Minister of Health and Health Services, Dr Rina Venter, was pleasant and fruitful.

Bishop J. L. Brenninkmeijer, Chairperson of the Department for Health Care and Education of the SACBC led the delegation. Other members of the delegation were Mrs Cecile Moloantoa, secretary of the Department of Health Care and Education of the SACBC, Dr. S. Hilton, Chairperson of the South African Catholic Doctor's Guild, Fr Hyacinth Ennis OFM, Professor of Moral Theology at St John Vianney Seminary, Pretoria, and Adv. A. Schwarzer, Chairperson of the Association of Catholic Health Care.

The purpose of the meeting was:

1. To establish closer contact between government health services and health care with institutions and personnel of the Catholic Church;
2. To inform the Minister of the services which the Church is providing and to explain the need for subsidization;
3. To broach a number of topics like possible amendments to the Abortion and Sterilisation Act, continued divisions on racial lines in the government health services, and official family planning policies and population control which government agencies and clinics are promoting.

The delegation was pleased to learn that – to a large extent – the Gospel values upon which the Church based its rejection of abortion, sterilisation and contraception were shared by the Government. The Government had at this moment no intention of widening or liberalising the provisions of the Abortion and Sterilisation Act, although the Minister emphasised that the Church could assist by continuing to lobby for its point of view.

On the question of subsidisation it became clear that present budget constraints within which the government had to operate, did cause curtailment of certain aspects of both state and provincial schemes of subsidisation. A greater portion of the budget was earmarked for the promotion of primary health care and this meant that there would be no increase in subsidies for the foreseeable future. However, the Minister would give a sympathetic ear to specific situations.

The delegation received assurances that the government was vigorously addressing racial discrimination in health services and specifically the Minister cited an instance in which she had acted as recently as the day before the meeting.

The discussion certainly met the expectations of the delegation. In particular there is every hope of ongoing contact so that co-operation between the government and the church in the field of health care will become a continuing reality.