

SACBC STATEMENT

ON

EDUCATION CRISIS (22/5/89)

“The South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference urges the government to heed the calls of pupils, teachers and parents regarding the education crisis in the country’s black schools. We fear that failure to solve an apparent and constantly burgeoning crisis in black schools could culminate in disaster worse than that experienced from 1984 to 1986.

“We are concerned by reports of the retrenchment of teachers in Soweto. An inadequate supply of teachers could only aggravate an already inferior education system. Surely, South Africa can ill afford to retrench teachers when so many pupils are forced to sit at home due to limited space in black schools. The state should provide more schools for black pupils and stop the retrenchment of black teachers.

“There are also reports of the dissatisfaction of pupils with racism practised by certain white teachers. The community expects teachers to groom its children for the future and not to subject pupils to abhorrent and immoral experiences that have for so long marred peaceful coexistence in this country.

“Dialogue between all parties involved in education is essential. Student Representative Councils and teachers’ meetings that deal with the education crisis could help facilitate a spirit of dialogue with education authorities and probably help to establish a just educational system.

“We deplore the detention and harassment of teachers and pupils and also reports of an intention to use soldiers and police in the administration of some schools in the Western Cape. Are the authorities admitting that the training or preparation of black teachers for carrying out their functions is so inadequate that even soldiers and police are better equipped for administrative work in black schools?

“The Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference has in the past called for the establishment of a single ministry of education. It repeats this call. The gross injustices in our present educational system can only be addressed by the creation of a single educational ministry decentralised on a geographic basis.”