

SACBC STATEMENT

ON

SUBSIDIZATION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS (1/4/86)

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference noted Mr. P. Clase, Minister of Education and Culture's statement in the House of Assembly about the proposed funding of private schools as from April 1 1986. The bishops believe that parents are the primary educators of their children, and they have the right to choose the schools to which they wish to send them. Besides, as taxpayers, parents have the right to financial assistance from the state. They therefore welcome the announcement that private schools will receive financial assistance.

Since private schools are entirely dependent on the voluntary support of parents, it is incumbent on them to maintain a satisfactory standard of education if they wish to ensure they own future. Consequently, the schools have always accepted and abided by whatever **educational** regulations **competent** authorities have laid down. The Catholic bishops find **totally unacceptable** that the payment of subsidies to schools under the department of Education and Culture should be linked in any way to racial composition of a school. This conflicts with the Gospel values to which all Catholic schools subscribe.

The experience of the past ten years has shown that "open" (non-racial) schools work well and that they have a valuable contribution to make, even though small in terms of the overall number of schools. These schools provide the opportunity for young people of our country to get to know and respect one another. What better preparation can there be for the future of South Africa?

The bishops found it strange that schools already operating as registered schools now need to reapply for registration. This is a contradiction to an earlier assurance given by the Minister of National Education, Mr. F. W. de Klerk, that this would not be necessary. Furthermore Mr. Clase chose to communicate with the schools only by means of a press release, reported in different and even contradictory ways by the different news media, instead of conveying the message directly to representatives of private schools. This has led to unnecessary confusion.