

SACBC STATEMENT
ON THE
ORDERLY MOVEMENT AND SETTLEMENT OF BLACK PERSONS' BILL
(29/8/82)

A consultation was held in August 1982 that involved the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference and representatives of priests, religious and laity, to consider the Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons' Bill. The harsh proposals contained therein moved the meeting to make strong representations to the Parliamentary Select Committee concerned.

It was felt that should these proposals become law they would give rise to serious social conflict and a major clash between government and the church.

Resettlement means that hundreds of thousands of people are being moved from their traditional homes to other areas, usually as far as they are concerned, without consultation and consent. Usually too, it is to them a serious disadvantage. Those affected by resettlement are exposed to physical hardships, emotional hurt and psychological stress. Deprived and depressed they are often people without hope.

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference reiterates its rejection and condemnation of the policy of resettlement.

We appeal to the authorities, even at this late juncture, to reconsider this policy and to be aware of the immense harm being done to the sons and daughters of our country.

Archdiocese of Cape Town memorandum on Black Persons' Settlement Bill
(August 1982)

As one concerned with the upholding of the rights of the individual and of the family according to Christian teaching and the proper ordering of society according to that same teaching, the question of 'influx control' is not a purely economic or social or political question. It is a moral question concerned with the rights of persons and of families and just order in society. The Church therefore has the right and duty to speak on this matter.

The phenomenon of urbanization is not peculiar to South Africa. It is in fact a world wide question, and South Africa can learn from the way in which the problem is being handled in other countries where Western Christian civilisation still is generally operative.

The ordinary person has by reason of his being a member of the human race the right to migrate to anywhere in the world where he hopes to earn a living. In this he is only restricted by his observance of the rights of others, and by his obligation to contribute to the common good. However, he brings to the community he seeks to join the benefits of his skill, and his ability to work and so contributes to the general good.

In an economy such as South Africa which relies on the willingness of people to contribute by their labour to the maintenance of this economy and its growth there is an inherent right for the individual to seek employment in the field of his skill and in the place where he judges he can best obtain employment. This freedom of movement is a right which the state has to recognise, and does in fact, recognise in South Africa in respect of the 'White' and 'Coloured' population groups. There is no restriction on the movement of White and Coloured persons. The 'Black' person has therefore the same right as a person. It is the duty of the state to uphold that right, and to assist where necessary. It is wrong therefore, morally speaking, to make the distinction between different persons on the grounds of colour. The state must assist to the best of its ability the person who seeks work.

It is the right of the person also to make provision for his wife and family to be with him in his movement to seek work and a living. Legislation which prohibits husband and wife and family from living together is immoral, and should not be tolerated.

The concern of the state, in this freely moving economy, which should operate, is the safeguarding of the common good. The state should therefore ensure sufficient housing for the urbanisation phenomenon. This does not entitle the state to prohibit the movement of the work seeker. A system must be devised which ensures a sufficiency of housing and other social necessities.

There is also the question of citizenship. It is wrong to deprive those who have hitherto enjoyed South African citizenship of this status. Those persons living in the Republic make their contribution by their labour and skill to the benefit of the community as a whole, and have the right to enjoy citizenship. It is wrong to treat people born and working in the Republic, and who wish so to continue, as if they have not the right to full citizenship.

Signed:
OWEN CARDINAL McCANN
Archbishop of Cape Town