

SACBC STATEMENT ON THE SATS/SARHWU DISPUTE (14/12/89)

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference notes with deep concern developments in the SARHWU/SATS dispute and earnestly appeals to both bodies to do all within their power to resolve the dispute as a matter of extreme urgency.

The heart of the dispute appears to be the matter of recognition by South African Transport Services of South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union. Because not recognised SARHWU was not allowed to participate in the wage agreement concluded this year.

Whatever the technical niceties non-participation in such discussions is a prelude to rejection.

Dissatisfaction with the minimum wage being paid led to the strike being called. After some initial talks deadlock was reached. Accusations of violence and intimidation have come from both parties.

What the public sees is a tragic loss of life and property. Workers are being dismissed "as fast as the administrative work could be completed". Already 11 500 workers have lost their jobs. Such action is neither good for SATS nor for the workers and their families. All are the losers under such circumstances.

In a season which should above all be marked by peace and goodwill intransigence on the part of either party will only exacerbate the situation even further. The Bishops' Conference therefore reiterates its call for both parties to re-enter talks.