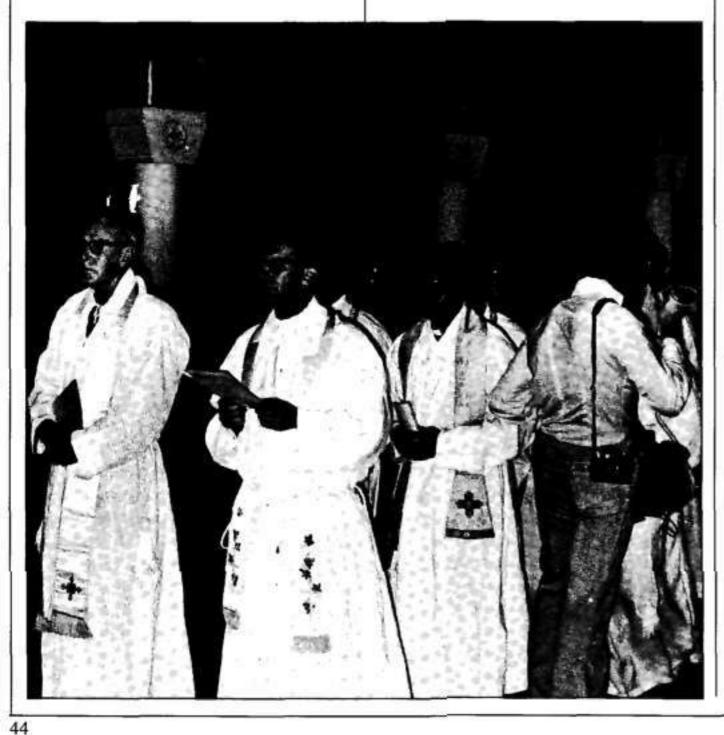
The Catholic Position

ast year the SA Catholic Bishops' Conference confused just about everybody when excerpts of a special commission which the Bishops appointed to examine sanctions were released. One newspaper reported "Catholics do U-turn on sanctions. "Another said: "No U-turn on sanctions." However, the following are parts of the report that were published :

■ The economy of southern Africa is very precariously balanced. The application, therefore, of economic pressures against the country is only going to exacerbate an existing serious situation, so that despite optimistic observations by certain business commentators that the economy of the country is starting to recover tentatively, it is reasonable to assume that as sanctions become more and more effective, the tentative recovery heralded by these commentators is likely to be destroyed.

■ It seems that an effective trade boycott is likely to be more detrimental than any disinvestment action. Export orientated sectors which would be most vulnerable to trade boycotts, are also the main employers of black labour, for example the mining and mineral industries. Measures leading to a decline in commercial agricultural output will also have serious implications for employment, particularly in those sub-sectors where labour in-put is relatively high to capital, and which are largely export orientated, for example maize, sugar, wool, deciduous and citrus fruits. An effective boycott of imports to South Africa would



result in denying foreign in-puts to local ndustries which will then curtail the scope for development in the South Afri in manufacturing sector and a resulting ncrease in the rate of unemployment. I is estimated that should all exports of coal be banned, it could be expected that about 25 000 coalmine workers will be etrenched, with approximately 100 (1)0 people depending on these incomes being affected. A total embargo against exports of agricultural products could lead to the 12trenchment of approximately 100 0 0 workers in the western Cape and northc n and eastern Transvaal. Workers in Natal a e also threatened. The recent rejection ty USA of some 500 000 tons of sugar is a indicator of the magnitude of trade boyco's in force. It is not known if an alternati e market has been found, but the sugar indu -try is going to be considerably prejudiced a move that will inevitably lead to loss f farm work for agricultural workers. Mo t importantly the agricultural sector al > provides accomodation to farmworkers at 1 their families, for example housing facil ties and farm schools. During 1984 near y 460 000 pupils were enrolled in 5 4⁻⁷ primary farm schools. This represented about 30% of total black school enrolme t in RSA. Adverse economic conditions which would arise in the event of total fruit embargoes could have a major impact c1 these communities.

■ As anticipated the whole issue of ecnomic pressures has clearly had a total / counter-productive effect on government thinking. The whole sanctions issue h s consolidated government in its retreat fro

meaningful and indeed, any, reform. Whit was anticipated by the pro-sanctions lob y early in 1986, namely an early change in government policy with expectations if imminent meaningful black participation in a regime overcome by the pressures if economic boycotts, is not likely to matealise, and will probably only emerge, but if an unpredictable manner, a long tin if ahead.

Sanctions are likely to continue to pre-

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surise business attitudes into applying their minds to the problems not only which have given rise to sanctions, but at possibilities of overcoming those possibilities ... there is no doubt that the economic decline in the country and the various pressures brought to bear have played a positive role in forcing busi-

nessmen and leaders to apply their minds to the whole subject.

The consensus amongst black people appears to swing like a pendulum depending on surveys, the questions asked, and who has reported on those surveys. In summary it seems logical that black people desperately want an end to the oppression of apartheid, and are willing to ensure some hardship to see this happen. It seems, however, that if the policy is likely to produce a loss of their vitally needed jobs, most blacks prove to be tentative about pressing the issue. The commission concludes from this report that it cannot be said that blacks overall favour sanctions and are prepared to endure the hardship, a view apparently held by a minority only, for when the stark reality of loss of jobs is presented, then quite humanly this spectre forces the preference for sanctions into the background.

There is a growing awareness of social responsibility in the private sector and in the business sector. Notwithstanding that lieve that a statement which says that because black South Africans are denied political rights, efforts to improve their economic, educational and social status are cosmetic or trivial, is a fallacy. Efforts are being made by numerous companies not only to play an identifiable role in the





the whole issue of so-called 'constructive engagement' has been damned by certain forces and is criticised for example by COSATU as being cosmetic only, we be-

porations within the country making considerable contributions towards the upliftment of education and economic facilities to black people. The greater the economic power including trade union power, and the educa-

tional and economic levels of the black community, the more successful they will be in making their political voice heard.