

Objections

ACCORDING to a report published in the Republikein of March 6 1987, interim government Minister, Andreas Shipanga, 'sharply criticised' and expressed his 'disappointment' about certain statements the Vicar General of the Roman Catholic Church, Father Bernhard Nordkamp, had allegedly made during an address given at a youth seminar, which, again according to the report, is said to have been organised by the Council of Churches. The report relates to what Mr Shipanga is alleged to have said during a meeting of the National Assembly on March 5 1987.

Mr Shipanga, according to the report, bases his claim about what the Vicar General had said during the youth seminar held at Dobra, on a letter by an unidentified "Windhoek student" which letter was published in the Windhoek Observer of February 28, 1987. The "student" alleges, inter alia, that Father Nordkamp had said that "law and order are sin". For the purposes of this statement it is sufficient to state that the letter contains further very serious distortions and outright untruths. It represents nothing but a very ill-considered attempt to smear the Roman Catholic Church and to discredit the Vicar General, whose commitment to bringing about justice with peace in a truly Christian society in Namibia is well known.

Against this background, Mr Shipanga's criticism is evidently unwarranted and uncalled for. Yet Mr Shipanga, who holds his high office by virtue of an appointment by the South African Government, sees fit to simply repeat these untrue allegations of what the Vicar General is taken to have said, relying on nothing more than an anonymous letter.

It is difficult to understand how a Cabinet minister can simply accept serious allegations without further verification. Mr Shipanga's failure to check his facts is even more frightening in view of the extremely wide arbitrary executive powers which are vested in him and his colleagues in the Cabinet of the interim government by virtue of numerous so-called security laws, which would clearly require the greatest measure of restraint and responsibility. These laws not only offend against fundamental human rights, but also invite serious abuses of due process and the Rule of Law.

It is most disturbing that Mr Shipanga, at the taxpayer's expense, and protected by a statutory immunity against possible legal action, repeats unchecked allegations by an obscure letter writer and then, on the basis of those slanderous allegations proceeds to 'sharply' criticise a senior and respected Priest of the order of the Oblates whose dedication towards the protection of Christian values in this territory can hardly be questioned.

Mr Shipanga has chosen Father Nordkamp as a target of severe criticism. At the same time Mr Shipanga however chooses to remain silent about the Police's admission under oath in the Heita trial presently before the Windhoek Supreme Court, presenting a picture of brutal violations of the most elementary human rights and an alarming disregard for law and order by the police.

In view of the aforesaid, this order wishes to record its strongest objection to Mr Shipanga's criticism of Father Bernhard Nordkamp.

The order of the Oblates has instructed its attorneys to secure a full record of what Mr Shipanga had said. Appropriate steps to remedy the situation which has arisen as a result of Mr Shipanga's address to the National Assembly and the publications

which appeared in the Windhoek Observer and the Republikein will then be considered.

FATHER H STEEGMANN OMI
Provincial of the Order of the Oblates
Windhoek

Dismissals