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Boycott halted: Tutu praised

Political Reporter *B. E. du Plessis*
THE Minister of Education and Training, Mr Barend du Plessis, has lauded the contribution made by Bishop Desmond Tutu to "politically and emotionally defuse the Atteridgeville schools' boycott."

The Minister told the Pretoria News yesterday the speedy and constructive co-operation of the school committees concerned enabled his department to identify the grievances at the root of the boycott and to put the remedial process in motion.

Most of the fundamental administrative problems had already been eliminated when Bishop Tutu, secretary-general of the SA Council of Churches, asked for an urgent interview with him on behalf of the SACC.

"I told him that he was welcome to make a contribution to the solving of the problem on an emotional and political level as far as intimidation was concerned," Mr du Plessis said.

"We agreed on a plan of action. My department was instrumental in the arrangements for a meeting in Atteridgeville to be addressed by Bishop Tutu."

"The reason for the bishop's appearance at the Atteridgeville meeting was basically to defuse the situation at the funeral of Emma Sathekge and to prevent it being turned into a political spectacle instead of a dignified occasion as it should be," Mr du Plessis said. *24/2/84*

The 14-year-old Emma Sathekge of the D. H. Peta high School was killed during police action in the boycotts.

Mr du Plessis said he and Bishop Tutu kept close contact during this time.

"The bishop phoned me after he addressed the Atteridgeville meeting and again two days before the schools were due to re-open.

"He then said that he had contact with certain of the boycott leaders who arranged the funeral and asked if he could give them certain undertakings so that they could call off the boycott from their side.

"We agreed on this matter and he relayed the message to them. The boycott leaders then held a meeting and told the students that the boycott was off."

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