

# Daily Dispatch

## OUR OPINION

### Bungled baby formula affair

**T**HE baby milk formula scandal turned sour this week, with both Nestlé and the provincial Health Department refusing to admit their role in the disastrously handled affair.

With no answers forthcoming, both appear to have conveniently forgotten that an unwarranted scandal was unleashed on the Catholic Church.

In the eyes of their communities, the moral standing of the three churches has been deeply scarred.

The reputation of the three priests nabbed has been severely tarnished.

In the aftermath police dismissed one of the cases for lack of evidence.

Yet demands for an apology have fallen on deaf ears.

It does not seem to matter to them that both Nestlé and the Department of Health have now been found to be at the centre of the controversy.

Instead, the church has been hung out to dry by both of them.

Enough is enough.

Someone, somewhere needs to come clean and give clarity on the matter.

Another worrying fact is that police proceeded to arrest the priests without properly investigating the matter.

Both police and Health officials used the “daring” raid as a quick photo opportunity.

They managed to confiscate over R100 000 worth of baby formula while grinning for the camera.

But the police are also victims.

They – and the media – acted on misinformation supplied by the Health Department.

Instead of releasing an apology, a war of words has erupted between the parties concerned.

Nestlé claims it was well within its rights to sell the milk to churches while the government department maintains that Nestlé breached the terms of its contract by selling a State product.

The Health Department’s handling of the saga leaves many unanswered questions.

One of the most obvious is: Does the Department of Health fully understand the legalities of, or even read, a contract before scrawling a signature?

It seems an apology to the priests and churches in question is not on the cards.

It does not matter that after the arrests it was revealed the churches had in fact bought the formula from Nestlé.

Nor that the churches’ names have been dragged through the mud after a bungle by the government department.

Nestlé and the Health Department need to wake up – put their differences aside – and admit their mistake.

If it is indeed true that Nestlé breached a government contract, the Health Department should not only prove it but act to recoup whatever the taxpayer has lost as a result.