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THE WITNESS

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Post-Theistic Thinking

by Thomas Dean

New Christian Story

by Richard Shaull

Network Reports ■ Letters

Letters to the Editor

The Witness reserves the right to condense all letters.

Congratulations on your November 24 issue featuring articles on corporate social responsibility. These presentations certainly clarify the conflict between a corporation's primary commitment to growth and profit and the necessity for our economic institutions to play a constructive role in solving our social problems.

Corporate leaders understandably are reluctant to make moral judgments beyond making certain that the corporation operates within the law. Church investors have an obligation to let the corporations know that they are tremendously interested in profits but not at any cost.

Our national Church has been a leader in this field through research, talks with management, proxy resolutions, and attendance at stockholder meetings. Let's support these efforts where we can.—*Mary Jane Baker, Wayne.*

— — —

I am sure my husband was one of your almost first subscribers to *The Witness*. I continued subscribing after his death until it went out of existence when Father Spofford died. I enjoyed *The Witness* and used Bishop Johnson's articles for my Church school teaching.

Father Dumphy wrote some good articles in those long ago days (I am 96) and I hope the present writers will hold to standard and not be trapped in some of the present shallow thinking and unlearned English.—*Mrs. R. N. Willcox.*

"The struggle is round man himself, and an understanding of what he is. What we are concerned with, therefore, is the search for a new anthropology, a view of man, which will pay proper respect both to the insights of the Renaissance about man and the insights of Christianity about God in relation to man. In this search I do not believe that it can be fruitful, or even legitimate, to attempt to take our stand on the old battle-fields, where the corpses of decaying categories are locked in meaningless embrace, where revelation lies stricken beside reason, where the supernatural lies dead beside the natural, where the trumpet of the Lord, borrowed by the dying dogmatist, lies tarnished by the side of the deaf and also dying secular hero, captain of his fate no longer. The knight of faith, as Kierkegaard called him in a beautiful image, can no longer come prancing into the tournament in the panoply of absolute assurance. Absolute solicitude, yes; and absolute resignation. For he comes not from another world but in the new hope and strength which he is given in this world. Like his master, he is the servant, so far as he may be, of men."

—from *The New Man*
by Ronald Gregor Smith, New York:
Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1956.

Among the Many Who Have Helped us as consultants in charting a course for *The Witness* are the following: J. C. Michael Allen, Jesse F. Anderson, Sr., Barry Bingham, Sr., Eugene Carson Blake, Richard N. Bolles, Myron B. Bloy, Jr., Alice Dieter, Ira Einhorn, Norman J. Faramelli, John C. Fletcher, Richard Fernandez, Judy Mathe Foley, Everett Francis, David A. Garcia, Richard E. Gary, John C. Goodbody, William B. Gray, Michael P. Hamilton, Suzanne R. Hiatt, Muhammad Kenyatta, Roy Larson, Werner Mark Linz, James Parks Morton, Charles L. Ritchie, Jr., Leonard M. Sive, William B. Spofford, Jr., Richard Taylor, Paul M. van Buren, Frederick B. Williams, Gibson Winter.



THE WITNESS

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Plowing New Ground

by Robert L. DeWitt

Probably few persons reading these words have not at some time heard gladly the Word of God spoken to them through the words or sacraments of the Church. Through that means of grace they heard words of life.

However, probably few reading these words have not, at other times, puzzled with frustration over the failure of the words or sacraments to reach them — a feeling that the “Word” was in a foreign tongue, or worse, came from a dead language.

The Witness sees this problem as integral to its task. We think it is important to seek clues which will help us reconstruct theology in response to the continued unfolding of human experience. Essentially that’s what this issue of *The Witness* is about.

“Theological reconstruction” has been a phrase in currency for several years. It expresses the widespread need for a more adequate framework for the understanding and proclamation of the Gospel. Sometimes this need has been expressed by the changing of words. This approach has been helpful — and insufficient. Much of the superficial debate over revision of the Prayer Book has been on this level — superficial, because verbal changes have been both necessary, and inadequate. Theological reconstruction is an issue cutting far deeper than preciousness of language, or emotional reactions to either the new or the ancient.

Sometimes we must try to say the same thing better. At other times we must try to say a new thing.

Our concern over our theology has to do with our being responsible evangelists and with our efforts to maintain our own spiritual integrity. It is crucial to gain a hearing from the contemporary world, yes; but it is also essential to know which insights of our tradition are still living options for us. These two concerns are closely related, if not identical. Essential to an effective evangelism, and to a living faith of one’s own, are intellectual integrity and honesty.

In this issue of *The Witness* Thomas Dean speaks to us through excerpts from the preface to his book *Post-Theistic Thinking*, which will be published early in 1975, by Temple University Press. Richard Shaull, having read the manuscript of the book, makes some preliminary responses.

We think this work is important, too, because it is concerned with a theological reconstruction that takes seriously the social witness of the Church, without which our faith ceases to be prophetic, ceases to be truly Biblical, ceases to be Christian.

We welcome your responses.

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Post-Theistic Thinking

by Thomas Dean

What follows is a thought experiment.

Imagine that you once believed in God but no longer do. Imagine that, after you stopped believing in God, you continued to believe in the truth of your religious tradition, but that one day even this became too much to affirm. Imagine that, nonetheless, something within you refused to be identified simply as an American, or a liberal, or a believer in the latest secular cause or spiritual quest.

Then there came the proclamation of the death of God — by theologians! — and with it a new gospel of secular man come of age. This was followed by the development — again within theology itself — of a radically political self-consciousness. Suddenly overnight your religious heritage was transformed. The possibilities of your tradition had become live options again. You became involved in the heady dialogue between this new theology and the most radical elements in secular life and thought. For you the old world of religion and theology was shattered forever, and the voyage toward a new, as yet unknown, world had begun.

What would the story of such an extraordinary journey look like? How might it have begun, what might have happened to you along the way, and where, insofar as one can speculate, might it lead? Even if none of us should ever choose to take such a journey himself, by taking one in his imagination perhaps he can gain some insight into the actual road ahead. What follows is an imaginary account, told in the first person, of one such journey.

We begin by going back 10 years or so to the late 1950s and early 1960s. For that was when we were first hearing from theologians a strange new story about the death of God. If someone had taken me aside at that time and tried to tell me what was soon to follow, I should have thought him mad or hopelessly utopian. And yet, in

a few short years, what happened to the voices of Barth and Bultmann, of Niebuhr and Tillich, in the land?

I was a young divinity student at the time, fresh out of a large midwestern state university, and just beginning, somewhat belatedly (about a half-century too late, I was to learn), my own quest for the historical Jesus. The status of God was already somewhat uncertain for me, but never mind. For a Christian, a strong enough sense of the historical Jesus would make up for a shaky sense of the reality of God. By the end of the first year of my quest I had found a wife, but the historical Jesus had (as Schweitzer had said he would) eluded my grasp.

Well, then, what next? Who, or what, was responsible for this frustrating state of affairs? It turned out to be a rather forbidding Teutonic thinker by the name of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger! The father of modern-day secular existentialism, the philosopher of human finitude for whom the meaning of life was to be found only through a resolute acceptance of man's essential being-toward-death. It was Heidegger whose philosophical interpretation of man and being, when imported into biblical scholarship and contemporary theology, effectively put an end not only to my youthfully-conceived attempt to get back to the historical Jesus, but to any lingering hopes I may have had of finding an intelligible metaphysical basis for a doctrine of God.

I made the pilgrimage to Germany with my wife in 1963-64. It was there, studying the words of Heidegger, that the full weight of the death of God and the end of quest for the historical Jesus came home to me. It was the year, too, that a handsome young president was assassinated. We felt a long way from home. Not only our theological but our secular illusions had been taken from us. By the time of our return, the new president was bombing a small country on the basis of a fabricated excuse, his election opponent was threatening to do even worse, and the warnings of our German friends that Hitler could happen anywhere, including "Amerika," began to seem more true. It was good to see the harbour of New York again, but the death-throes of our old world had commenced. What would emerge on the other side?

An Exhilarating Succession

We came back to upheavals in the world of theology too. In rapid succession there appeared Paul van Buren's *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (1963), a series of manifestos by William Hamilton and Thomas J. J. Altizer proclaiming the advent of *Radical Theology and the Death*

of God (1963-66), and Harvey Cox's invitation to celebrate the new freedom of *The Secular City* (1965). It was an unbelievably exhilarating time.

This first wave of the new theology had a distinctively American character. Its orientation was primarily anti-metaphysical, anti-theistic, but for the rest it was an affirmation of the modern secular world as an American knew it. It was, in other words, a radical theology of American bourgeois liberalism. It as yet lacked a political sense. But we were also experiencing, on a more practical level, the arrival at the divinity schools of the new generation of student radicals. They came to Union Theological Seminary in the fall of 1964. The bombing in Vietnam was to lead to a whole new series of explosions



in the world of theology as well. We drew our resources for radical social criticism from the prophetic, eschatological, and apocalyptic literature of the Bible. For us the radicalism of the new theology had begun to acquire a specifically political dimension.

That was also the year when some of us first began to read Marx. Marx! The spiritual father of godless, atheistic communism, the ideological enemy of everything religious or American. As I began to read Marx, I realized that I was not looking for ammunition with which to attack and rethink theology. My introduction to Marxism, however, was through the so-called younger Marx. This Marx was not the older, battle-scarred veteran of the *Communist Manifesto* and later writings, not the implacable determinist portrayed by the ideologists of Stalinist Marxism, but an engaging, humanistic, proto-existentialist thinking whose works had not been known or published until the 1930s. (In the light of this "new" Marx, and the humanized view of Marxism he made possible, standard texts such as Charles West's *Communism and the Theologians* suddenly seemed to be reflections of the earlier cold war era of the 1940s and 1950s). There now seemed a need for a different kind of theology, a theology which was no longer the hand-maiden of the American political establishment, but one which represented instead a radical critique of that establishment based on a synthesis of Marxism and the original revolutionary message of the Bible itself.

A Second Wave

By the time I took my first teaching post in the fall of 1966, the second wave of the new theology — a theology which was radical in a political rather than an anti-theistic sense — was well under way. As the movement of the death of God theology subsided (1963-66), a group of politically-oriented European theologians came to the fore (1966-69). Suddenly the names we had been hearing about were translated and became accessible to us in America as well: Jurgen Moltmann, Johannes Metz, Roger Garaudy and Richard Shaull.

The excitement generated by these theologies of revolution was, if anything, even greater than that which greeted the death of God theology. But it was becoming increasingly difficult to sort things out. How was one to get some perspective on this rapid succession of movements that were so dramatically transforming our entire theological tradition?

Whatever the answer, I could not go on until I had

somehow come to terms with these different movements. Being basically irenic, however, I wanted to work out a position that took account of what each of them had to say. So I tried the following hypothesis: What if that which was radical in the first type of radical theology — its anti-theistic, radically finitist ontology — could be brought over into what was radical in the second type of radical theology? For this latter, while radical in its political orientation, had reverted to a metaphysically untroubled affirmation of God, so that ontologically it was still pre-radical. What needed to be shown was that the radicalism of the death of God demanded a corresponding radicalism in the political sphere as well, and that, conversely, radicalism in a political sense would be theoretically incomplete if it was not grounded in a radicalism on the level of metaphysics as well. If I could demonstrate that each of these theologies required the other, then my thought-experiment — the bringing together of Heidegger's finitist ontology, Marx's social critique, and a type of Christian thinking that was post-theistic (no longer theological, since it would lack a doctrine of God, but still Christian by virtue of its link to the historical tradition bearing that name) — would be a success.

An Intellectual Puzzle

But what could I hope to accomplish by means of such a proposal beyond resolving an intellectual puzzle to my own personal satisfaction? Well, given the assumptions from which I was starting, I hoped to be able to prove to my theologically-inclined colleagues that it was no longer necessary or even possible to defend a theistic perspective on man and being. Talk about God, or about transcendence, would be shown to be a way of saying, in an upside down or indirect way, what could be said more adequately and straightforwardly in a radically finitist and non-theistic way. We are finite beings living in a finite world. A clear-eyed recognition of that fact must inevitably have a further radicalizing effect upon our political consciousness of the conditions of human existence in the one and only world in which it is given us to live. If we accept the criticisms of Heidegger, the radical metaphysician, and Marx, the radical social philosopher, then, I wanted to say, theology can never again hope to make an intelligible or plausible case for a theistic perspective — however "radical" — on human reality.

To illustrate this speculative hypothesis, I proposed to describe two ways in which post-theistic thinking could

be incorporated in the thought of a particular tradition — in one case, Marxism, in the other, Christianity. Whether either of the resulting positions — the Marxist humanist and the radical Christian — was actually held by anyone in every particular, success in rendering them imaginatively concrete and believable would go a long way toward confirming my original hypothesis. Of course it was necessary that I, as the experimenter, avoid giving the impression that I subscribed to either one of these positions. They were to be regarded as the hypothetical creations of a philosopher's workshop. At best they could be considered, as Kierkegaard might have said, "existence-possibilities," but never ones that could be discovered in pure form in the actual confusion of everyday lives. My own position was in any case a vague and shifting one, unclear even in its general features, and hence had little useful bearing on the case.

Here we conclude our imaginary first-person journey through the recent decade of the death of God and the end of theological thinking. But the actual work of post-theistic thinking must, of course, go on. We have come too far to think of turning back. And besides, despite our lack of certainty or assurance about the new road ahead, would any of us really have it any other way?

And so, let the experiment proceed!

Thomas Dean: assistant professor of religion, Temple University; author, *Heidegger, Marx, and Secular Theology*, and *Marxism and Radical Religion* (with John C. Raines); this article adapted from the preface of his forthcoming book, *Post-Theistic Thinking: The Marxist-Christian Dialogue in Radical Perspective*, Temple University Press, 1975.



Response To Thomas Dean

Christian Faith: The New Story

by Richard Shaull

For several decades we have experienced a change in our perception of ourselves and of our world, and of the concepts we use to speak about it. Call it what you will: the process of secularization, a major shift from a transcendent metaphysic of being to being-in-this-world, or the radical historicizing of our existence with all the finiteness, contingency and temporality that go with it.

Whatever name you give to it, it represents the erosion of the solid ground on which we have stood for the past 1,500 years. It calls into question our most basic theological formulations and the assumptions underlying them. In response, many Christians, out of fear, are turning to those who repeat and absolutize the old story. From time to time, new theologians capture our attention by retelling it as the story of hope, revolution or liberation.

Now Thomas Dean has come along to declare that we will get nowhere until we are able to tell a new story; that our Christian past equips us to do just that; and that the help we need can come from Marx, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty — the philosophers of radical secularity.

For Dean, the radical theologians (Moltmann, Pannenberg, Metz, and others) have made a significant contribution. They offer us a new synthesis of the radical elements of the Biblical tradition and of contemporary secular thought. They call us to commitment to the contemporary struggle for social and political emancipation. By reworking certain original biblical concepts, they speak of the God of Exodus and of Easter, the God "ahead of us" as the power of an open future. They stress the centrality of Christ, the New Man, whose resurrection opened — and continues to open again and again — a new historical space for us. And they make us feel at home in the world as the field of God's transforming and liberating activity.

But, says Dean, these men are leading us into a dead end because of the limits they have set for themselves. By claiming that one particular tradition (or systematic formulation of it) must be normative for thought and action today, they get bogged down with it — and with the task of defending it. Thus they make claims for the revolutionary significance of Jesus which are "highly problematical and not persuasive"; and while they try to speak to the modern world, they are in the end compelled to "preserve the old story" together with the ancient language and world-view that goes with it.

Old Theological Frameworks

These theologians want to deal with the temporal and the historical, with relativity and change. But their theology is still grounded in a "meta-physics of transcendent being" that has been undermined philosophically since the time of Kant and Hume. The language and perspectives they take from radical, secular thinkers are neatly fit into and grounded in their old theological frameworks. Many insecure Christians may be happy with the result; for others involved in the present struggle for human emancipation, it makes little or no sense.

The real test of our theology is whether it provides power for creative thought, whether it helps sustain the long struggle for social emancipation. Dean's answer is: the radical theologians have contributed nothing that would not otherwise be there. What they really end up doing is announcing to a secular world what the secular world has been announcing to them for a rather long time. And thus far their thought has not been a source of significant power for human transformation.

Our problem has been that, however radical we appear to be, we still think in theistic terms. This means that we are still trying to ground our life, our world and our thought in some ultimate order of reality above and beyond ourselves. As a result, we perceive the atheist as our enemy because he denies the existence of God, when in reality he hankers after the same metaphysical grounding we do.

Dean insists that we cannot break out of this bind until we situate ourselves firmly in this world and re-define reality and being in the radically different terms this calls for.

In order to do this, Dean turns to Karl Marx. It was Marx who first moved beyond the terms of the theistic-atheistic debate. He set out to destroy the theory of the

other world in order to establish the truth of this world, to construct a positive humanism that could stand on its own two feet.

In this attempt, he affirmed man's positive self-consciousness without attempting to deify it. ("Man is the highest being for man.") But this man is not an abstraction. He is the corporeal sentient human being at a particular stage in the historical development of his social relationships and productive capacities. Marx was concerned about men and women creating and determining themselves and the conditions of their own existence through sensuous activity (praxis). Under the influence of Hegel, he saw them as finite-yet-self-transcending-beings called to pass beyond every limit. And, as the existing social order is limiting and alienating, human self-realization is a matter of practical revolutionary struggle toward a new and open future.

Being-in-the-World

What Marx suggested very tentatively 100 years ago has now been fully developed by a number of European thinkers, especially Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. With no concern to derive categories of being from some transcendent realm, they are free to probe deeply and range widely in their description of being-in-the-world. For them this means contingency. There is no ultimate ground or reason for the being of things; it cannot be derived or deduced from anything higher. It means temporality. We perceive objects in time, bringing past determinations and projecting unfinished possibilities ahead of them. We also perceive ourselves in the same way. By recognizing that time is finite, we break the hold of the past over us. Our existence in time is not timelessly predetermined by its origins in the past. Time is always surpassing itself; the being of things is not fixed but reaches ahead. The future offers us surprising new possibilities.

It also means that human beings — and their world — are finite. We do not start out with any absolute confirmation of self, of our thought or of a structure of meaning. But that does not drive us to the conclusion that being is alien and indifferent, devoid of meaning or grace. It rather opens us toward the world with our enduring capacity to project new possibilities. We can engage in a process of reflection which is never sure of itself and for that very reason is open to increasing multiplicity and continuous enlargement.

Committed to living with partial and shifting meaning, we are free for the risk and adventure of bringing meaning into existence out of the dialectical interchange with the world. Our goal is not the realization of our ultimate destiny but the creation of a more human future. While along that road we have no guarantee against final shipwreck; we may encounter what Bergson once called generosity at the root of being. In this context, every step ahead is an act of faith. And if we, perchance, learn to live by faith, we live in the world with a total commitment to it and total openness to shaping it anew.

If we as Christians dare to enter this new world of experience and thought and let go of our old theistic and metaphysical concepts, what will happen to us? Dean contends, and I agree with him, that this shift will open new horizons for Christian thinking. Things formerly said in the old metaphysical framework will become important again. Images, symbols and stories out of a long historical and interpretative tradition may once again have power to stir our imagination, enlarge our vision of the future, and bring much needed resources for human self-transcendence and social transformation.

Freed from the old metaphysical conception of transcendence, our rich Christian imagery can encourage men and women to identify and affirm their higher needs and aspirations; to be dissatisfied unless they are pushing beyond their present selves; to refuse to accept the



All illustrations from *The Bible For Today*, Oxford University Press, 1941.

terms that are set by current conceptual frameworks and institutional patterns; and to look critically at themselves, their actions and the structure they are attempting to create.

Appropriating Freedom

We are no longer compelled to dwell on death, guilt and despair in order to force women and men to accept a theistic grounding for their lives, to insist that they must have a feeling of absolute dependence and recognize that they are at the end of their tether. Rather, we can urge them to appropriate their freedom to explore the wide-open spaces of the fullest human existence in-this-world instead of settling for physical, biological or socially restricted levels of being. We can draw on resources from our Christian historical experience to transform our anxiety in the face of death. The acceptance of the contingency of our existence in time can produce intensified awareness, a deeper sense of responsibility, an openness to wonder and mystery and the experience of what Heidegger calls "an unshakeable joy."

As we accept contingency and temporality, we may discover that something out of our former Christian perception of reality empowers us to be irreducibly open to what is new and not yet, to be free to live without answers or alternative structures, and to be sensitive to the surprising new possibilities of understanding, of meaning and of human relationships that are "given" to us along the way.

Once we have come to perceive the world as the totality of practical relations within which men and women exist, as that finite and open-ended reality we know through our day-to-day involvement in it, our Christian thought can express itself in new terms. As Christians we once again live in two worlds, the second one of which is that of mystery and wonder. It is the world of future possibility toward which this present world can move as we give priority to the future, project our vision and aspirations into it, and critically examine and break open existing structures.

If these possibilities for Christian thought are to become realities, then we must re-define the relation of our Christian historical tradition to this new view of man and the world and discover how to draw on that tradition without being stuck with the old terms. This can happen if we recognize that our tradition is not a body of "given essentials" but the story of a people moving toward a

new and open future, as they have found strength to grow and to change. Consequently, that story is alive and has power for us as it facilitates our response in the present and helps break open a new future for us. Today, it must be a new story precisely in order to be the bearer of history-making realities from the past that can make a difference now; a story that could not have been told before, but could not have been told at all if it were not a story about our past, to use Dean's words.

"By the time Christianity had been transformed into the official State religion under Constantine, the radically secular hope of the Biblical tradition had been all but abandoned by the established Church and left to others—initially to the heretic and sectarian traditions, in modern times to secular revolutionary movements."

**—Post-Theistic Thinking
by Thomas Dean,
Temple University Press.**

The author's major example of what this means has to do with the Jesus of history. What set Jesus apart was his eschatological conviction that it was his task to assist in the next stage of the in-breaking reality of the Kingdom of God. Because of Him, a new story had begun for the early Christians. We cannot speak eschatologically by using the mythological terms of the first century. In that sense Jesus will always be a stranger to us. But if we see his words and deeds as constituting events of a new historical reality, and if we see ourselves in a similar situation in which we are called upon to create a new order, then what he said and did may speak to us with power.

I have tried to present a very brief outline of a new venture in Christian thinking to which Thomas Dean invites us. I don't know what you or others will make of it. What I can say is that, as one of the theologians most frequently criticized by the author, I've been greatly helped along the next stage of my own journey.

Richard Shaull: professor of ecumenics, Princeton Theological Seminary; author, *Encounter with Revolution and Containment and Change* (with Carl Oglesby).

World Food Conference

The News Behind the News

by Hugh White

Roy Larson's report in the January 12 issue of *The Witness* on the United Nations World Food Conference in Rome describes well Kissinger's impact on the assembly, the failure of the American delegation to make a commitment to provide additional emergency food aid and places in perspective the Church's marginal role in the deliberations. He failed, however, to report the basic struggle in the conference between two strikingly different political-economic systems.

The capitalist system, from a position of material and technical advantage, advocated interdependence, new investment and new research. In contrast the socialist system, from a position of developing power, advocated self-reliance, independence for the nation-state and trade based on the principles of equality, mutual benefit and the exchange of needed goods.

In a speech which Larson characterized as brilliant and at moments, lyrical, Kissinger described the problems of production, distribution and reserves, the need for research, planning and cooperative action; but the American Sec. of State failed to acknowledge, except in a cursory manner, the conflict between the two systems.

At the opening of his address, Kissinger said, "We are stranded between old conceptions of political conduct and the wholly new environment . . ." But never did the diplomat spell out in detail those concepts that are obsolete.

In contrast, Hao Chung-shih, leader of the Chinese delegation, whom Larson characterizes, along with

Agriculture Sec. Earl Butz and others, as getting in "propaganda licks," says that the food problem is "mainly the result of plunder and control by colonialism, imperialism and the superpowers." As a prerequisite to solving the food problem, he said, the developing nations must win and safeguard their political and economic independence.

It is time we stopped labeling analysis and concepts from the socialist world as propaganda or denigrating their criticism of us. We in the capitalist world have and still do plunder, at home as well as overseas. We have paid low prices for natural resources from developing nations and we have sold those same developing nations food and finished products at exorbitant prices.

Evidence of the growing support for the independence of nation-states and the concept of self-reliance is the UN General Assembly's approval — by a vote of 120 to 6 — of the "Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States" on December 12, one month after the close of the World Food Conference in Rome. The Charter declares that every nation would have full control over all its wealth, resources and economic activities; the right to regulate foreign investments in accordance with its laws; and to supervise transnational corporations within its jurisdiction. The new charter, like the Assembly's human rights declaration 25 years ago, depends for its impact on moral, rather than legal, force.

We not only have to change our thinking but, as Larson points out, we need to change our actions. My hope is that the struggle will be heightened to the point where the contradictions within and between the two political-economic systems are resolved, advancing the possibilities for human survival and development.

Network Reports

People and Institutions: Beginnings of a Network

"It's network time."

This is the conviction of Robert DeWitt, editor of *The Witness*, and director of the unofficial Church and Society project.

Since resigning as bishop of Pennsylvania in 1973, DeWitt has been attempting to develop a network of "progressive people and institutions committed to the social mission of the Church. Assisting him are Hugh White of Detroit and Charles Ritchie of Philadelphia.

Progressives today, according to DeWitt, feel "isolated and alone," but remain committed to social change. As a result, he believes, there is a need for a national network that will enable progressives to join together in efforts to effect systemic change.

To test the viability of the network idea, DeWitt and his associates recently met with Church leaders and with representatives of the Institute for Policy Studies and the College of Preachers in Washington, D.C.

As DeWitt sees them, the objectives of the Church and Society Network are:

- to develop an awareness of the ways institutional religion affirms the status quo and impedes the struggle for justice, freedom and dignity;
- to promote dialogue and joint action among Christians, Marxists and others;
- to organize a systematic way of sharing knowledge, skills and material resources; and
- to develop a style of action combining theory and practice, engagement and reflection.

Policy Studies Institute: The Second Decade

During its second decade, the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., expects to produce an *Encyclopedia of Social Reconstruction: Plans and*

Practice for a New Society.

"In the Encyclopedia," an Institute publication states, "we seek an end to oppressive thoughts and actions just as the great encyclopedias of the 18th century sought an end to witchcraft and magic."

Current Institute research points to the need in American society for more decentralization of power and the development of more "workable communities" built on the base of full democratic participation.

Started in 1963, the Institute generated research which led its staff and fellows to conclude by 1972 that the "concentration of vast power in the hands of a few had become typical of American policy, economy and culture and contributed to the fostering of racism and militarism."

The Institute has a staff of 24. Others participating in its work include 16 resident fellows and 12 associate fellows.

To receive free copies of a monthly newsletter, write Bethany Weidner, LINK Editor, Institute for Policy Studies, 1520 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Also available is a pamphlet — "Beginning the Second Decade: 1963-1973" — which describes the organization's plans for the immediate future.

Subscribers Meet

Subscribers to *The Witness* assessed the revised magazine's new format and contents at recent meetings in Seattle, San Francisco and Indianapolis.

At all three meetings, a consensus formed around these major ideas:

FORMAT: "Very good."

ARTICLES: "Too heavy."

RECOMMENDATIONS: "More humor and more reporting on local events."

Attending the sessions were:

Seattle — Robert Anderson, Jr., Ivor Curtis, John Fretz, John Gorsuch, Robert and Sally Hayman, E. Michael Jackson, William and Marie Johnson and Cabell Tennis.

San Francisco — Philip Adams, Julian Bartlett, Jack and Emily Brown, Esther Davis, Alda Marsh, Jack and Ginny McCarty, Ann McElroy, Mrs. Andrew Merryman, Kilmer Myers, Nigel Renton, Stan Rodgers, George Tittman and Ellen Wondra.

Indianapolis — Sara Bennett, June Ellis, Dee Hann, Jean Holbrook, Jacqueline Means, Jane Oglesby, Dave and Sue Quimby, Elaine Stone, Alice Usher, Lloyd Williams and Nancy Woollen.

Readers of *The Witness* are invited to submit reports on a wide variety of subjects and events looked at from many perspectives. Send reports to *The Witness*/Network Reports, 17187 Wildemere, Detroit, Michigan 48221.

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