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## Mainline Protestantism: After The Cover-Up

by Jeffrey K. Hadden

## With Responses:

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From The Outside      by Lynda Ann Ewen

# Letters to the Editor

*The Witness* reserves the right to condense all letters.

## Still Going Strong

Mrs. Howard W. Benz, Feb. 6, 1958  
Churchwoman of East Cleveland

In reading Bishop Mosley's excellent remarks on racial segregation (1-23-58) one is struck by the similarity between the cliches he attacks and the ones used to justify continuing restrictions governing women in our Church.

It is a challenging mental exercise to try to discover one valid argument to support either of these forms of discrimination. The ones that readily come to mind are seen to be varieties of either pride or prejudice or else efforts to prove doctrine by proof text.

In reply to the usual condescending explanation that matters of this kind take time, one must ask, "How can a great Church give convincing Christian witness, this month or this year, to a desperate world when some of its lay and clerical leaders believe that truth and justice may be deferred at will and others feel that in a clash between principle and prejudice, they can properly remain neutral?"

Mrs. Howard W. Benz, Feb. 19, 1975

Although I was happy when *The Witness* was reborn, each issue disappoints me more and here's why.

There is no reason why this magazine should be so hard to understand and, as a result, not interesting or thought-provoking to read. A sentence written by the *New York Times* religion editor Kenneth A. Briggs in the February 16 issue illustrates my point.

Mr. Briggs wrote: "At the same time the Church was found *not* to be *without* restorative powers." Wouldn't something like "Nevertheless, the Church has restorative powers" have been easier to understand?

The point taken in the humorous "Graffiti Found at St. John's University" is well made. The fuzzy concepts and pedantic stance of too many theologians, whether they contribute to *The Witness* or not, is enough to cause even our Lord to ask, "What does he mean?"

*Editor's Note:* Thanks for being you. We'll try harder.

Thank you for the gift subscription to *The Witness*. An initial glance at the early issues reveals an attractive format and judging by titles and authors, exciting contents. As chairman of the communications committee of the Executive Council I congratulate you and all others responsible for this valuable contribution to the communications network of the Church. I shall read it with interest.

With all good wishes and warmest personal regards.—  
Robert Ray Parks, rector, Trinity Church, New York City

With reference to your lead editorial of December 8, 1974, I would like you to have some facts which I think are relevant.

When the Presiding Bishop turned down the offering from Riverside Church, he took an equivalent amount of money from another fund and contributed it to world famine. Subsequently, when the offering was sent to me, after a discussion with the Presiding Bishop, I sent it to the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief and it was accepted. Thus the cause of world relief received twice as much as it would have otherwise. I think it is important for it to be known that the Presiding Bishop, by his action, did not deprive the hungry of the help intended by those who gave the offering at Riverside.—the Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, New York City

May I express to you my delight and deep satisfaction in learning that *The Witness* will be published again. As an old-time EPF member, I used to receive *The Witness* through the kindness of a friend (I was never able to find out who the kind giver was) and I have sadly missed it all these past years. I am also glad to see that our Bishop Krumm is a member of the Board of Directors.

We used to have an EPF chapter here in Cincinnati, but happened to lose all its working members. Unfortunately I am now too old and not well enough to attempt to build up another chapter. However, perhaps *The Witness* may be helpful in making another attempt.

I am enclosing my check for the introductory subscription. I shall do what I can to promote *The Witness* among my church members.—Margaret von Selle, Cincinnati, OH

# THE WITNESS

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## The Ministry Of Hope

by Robert L. DeWitt

There is no need today to cry havoc. What our side-long glances suspected, has been confirmed by the clear presence of panic. Its face has become familiar. Our own private observations have been reinforced by the testimony of others. And in the light of this, faith and hope seem to have become acts of bravado, of muscular religion ("praise the Lord"). But the spiritual athletes seem to flex their spiritual muscles in an empty gymnasium.

And yet, was it not always so? Faith has always struggled against unfaith. Apart from the latter, there would have been no need for the former. And hope has always been borne of the lack of — and therefore the need for — hope. At the center of this contradiction lies one of the deepest clues to what it means to be human.

Today's danger, however, is of a different sort. It is not the validity, the necessity, of faith and hope that is in question. Rather, it is the danger of making them into spiritual hypotheses, separated from the human, material conditions which are the only conditions under which faith and hope have any pertinence to this life.

What does it mean to speak to a woman about the church as the household of faith when her aspirations for a vocation to the ordained priesthood are denied by that church? What does it mean to speak to a sub-Saharan woman about faith in a God of love when her bloated child's hunger seems a living refutation of that love? What does it mean to speak to an unemployed assembly line worker about Christian hope, when his unemployment benefits have expired as the expression of an economic system whose priorities do not include his gainful employment?

How can the church minister meaningful to people who need an incarnated faith, an incarnated hope? *Can* the church minister to such? Of course. Where such ministry is performed, there is the church. But that kind of ministry may appear in unexpected places, performed by unfamiliar — even surprising — agents of ministry.

And if we who call ourselves the church do not engage in this incarnated kind of ministry, we will be hiding our light under a bushel. Even, perhaps, be compromised by involvement in a cover-up of the grace-full Word of salvation.



# Mainline Protestantism: After the Cover-Up

by Jeffrey K. Hadden

During the early 1960s a new type of book began to compete with traditional inspirational literature on the religious best-seller lists. Instead of fare for meditation and peaceful reflection, the new literature raised charges of complacency and indifference to social issues, especially to the emerging racial crisis, against organized religion. The titles often captured, clearly and concisely, the heart of the indictments: *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, *The Comfortable Pew*, *My People is the Enemy*. They quickly became useful phrases for the growing socially-conscious segments in the churches.

Within a few short years a social movement of extensive proportions had been generated among American clergy. The image of clergy in America as acceptors and defenders of the status quo was thus changed to a reputation as bold leaders in the vanguard of social change.

In New York, Chicago, and Cleveland interdenominational and interfaith training centers were created to instruct religious leaders in the skills of action ministries. Other action-training centers sprang up across the country. Experimental social action ministries and congregations were created. There was a sense of hope and optimism that out of the turmoil and chaos of the 1960s would emerge a more just and human society in the 1970s.

This optimism proved short-lived. As conservative laypeople became more aware of the scope and breadth of

radical social action in the name of their faith and with their money, they revolted. Some revolted by simply walking away from church. Others joined more conservative churches. But a sufficient number stayed to fight. The impact of the lay revolt was felt quickly and broadly throughout the liberal church tradition in America. They fought with their pocketbooks, and they fought with their organizational structures, at every level from the local parish to the national denominational headquarters and the National Council of Churches, to change policies, and to curtail the flow of dollars into radical ministries.

For laity, all this was a sudden and radical departure from the past. These men of conviction, their clergy, had moved from position papers to resolutions to action but had seldom shepherded their flocks along the same pathway. The Church, as most laity understood it, was a place of quiet refuge from a troubled world. It was certainly not a place for harassments and reprimands and indictments for all the problems of society, most of which were too large or too remote anyway. Ministers had a job to do — a job of caring for the spiritual lives of their parishioners, of preaching, administering sacraments, visiting the sick and counseling the bereaved; they were paid for these functions, not for organizing the poor and marching in demonstrations.

Hence, the mass movement of clergy into the political arena was ill-fated and short-lived. Hundreds of parish ministers who got involved were fired, forced to resign, or voluntarily left the ministry in disillusionment. When laity discovered that much of the impetus for involvement came from church organizations beyond the local parish, they cut off local funds to these organizations and quickly captured positions of leadership where they could redirect monies and dismantle programs.

It is difficult to assemble accurate data on the magnitude of the churches' retreat from social action. Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that many social action programs were carefully camouflaged under innocent sounding titles or buried in the budgets of traditionally status quo departments. Another difficulty has to do with the reorganization of the National Council and several major denominations. A third difficulty is that many churchleaders have set up a smoke screen of rhetoric to the effect that social action monies have been redistributed back to local congregations and communities. The task of checking this out is enormous. To the extent that I have been able to check out claims of

social action programs at the local level, they simply do not exist or exist only as paper organizations. For all intents and purposes, social action in the churches has passed from the national scene. Little is presently being done by churches to remove the social injustices which yet pervade our society. What I find far more disturbing and far more significant is the churches' denial of what they have done and are doing.

### People's Deception

If and when the full truth of Watergate is known, perhaps the most worthy finding will be a quantum leap forward in our understanding of people's capacity to deceive themselves, to become so completely captive to a reality they and their allies have created that they are incapable of comprehending the meaning of their own thoughts and deeds. Today, thousands of church leaders in liberal Protestantism are participating in a massive cover-up which, in terms of the future of moral leadership for this nation, is every bit as disturbing as the Watergate scandal. Like the Watergate, the religious establishment's cover-up involves the utilization of the most sophisticated public relations techniques: taking the offensive against those who bring bad news, rendering inoperative programs, positions, and convictions which only yesterday were an integral part of the institution's integrity, twisting facts to fit newly emerging "realities," and performing radical surgery to remove internal dissent. As they move to close ranks, they are creating a world as unreal as the world created by the men of Watergate who shut themselves off from all but the creations of their own imaginations.

To be sure, the crimes now being committed within the structures of liberal Protestantism are not the kind for which people are sent to prison. They are crimes of commission, omission, impotence, and incompetence, committed by men and women whose motives are pure and honorable and whose loyalty is impeccable. But these misdeeds, if unchecked, may permanently intercept a noble institution's rendezvous with the struggle to promote human dignity and justice.

Today the face of crucial social problems — when the poor are getting poorer and we still can't integrate our schools and neighborhoods — the churches have not only shrunk from their tasks and cowered before the implications of the gospel preached on the picket line, but they have further surrendered to vulgar, self-indulgent expressions of Americana. This is not to imply

that the church had all the answers during the social activism of the 1960s. It is rather an assertion that the church was beginning to recognize an important mission and now has instead joined (or perhaps led) the ranks of those who, failing to see immediate changes, now see no problems.

Take, for example Dean M. Kelley, one of the loudest voices in the cry to reconstruct reality within liberal Protestantism. His widely read book *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* is not about why conservative churches are growing at all, but why liberal churches are declining. As a member of the inner circle of the National Council of Churches and possessing a sterling record on the front lines of the civil rights movement, Kelley has all the requisite credentials for summoning the attention of mainline Protestant denominations. Who, better than an insider who has fought the good fight, can tell us what has gone wrong and whither the morrow?

### Benign Neglect

There is no ambiguity in Kelley's message. He is telling his colleagues it is time for the churches to treat issues of brotherhood, justice, and peace with a little benign neglect. Not once does Kelley ask how the churches can get back in the battle. He assumes it was all wrong. Like the prodigal son, the church's fling with the world is over. Take no thought of the noble causes left scattered across the battlefield. It is time for repentance. Survival demands our attention now. Maintenance goals must take precedence over mission outreach. Therefore, drastically reduce wasteful and wistful programs and austere eliminate the frills from bureaucracy. Most importantly, focus attention on the renewal of meaning among communicants. This is one sure thing that will keep them coming. Encounter groups may help members find themselves, but, more importantly, seek ways in which religion can be relevant to the private lives of parishioners as they celebrate their joys, seek comfort for their sorrows, and ask for guidance when decisions must be made. As their personal needs are met, their commitment to the church will increase.

Kelley presents himself as a social scientist drawing conclusions from data. Actually, what he has done has been to make an argument to support his own hypotheses by occasionally referring to a set of time series tables of growth trends for several religious groups. He misuses the cloak of social science by ignoring some parts of his data, by drawing unsubstantiated

conclusions, and by glossing over relevant but contradictory findings. His data brings him to his conclusions only by a leap of faith, not by logical progression.

Kelley's conclusions are not a prescription for healing the wounds of the churches just returned from the battle-front, nor are they new strategies for getting on with the goals he so recently espoused. They are instead a reinterpretation of mission designed to give reasons why the churches should follow the road of retreat they have already walked.

A different approach is followed by two books published through the National Council of Churches Office of Research, Evaluation, and Planning during the past two years. Rather than explain away the problems of the churches as healthy change, growing stability, or such, these books take the position that in the final analysis the "problems" are not even problems, and all is well with religious institutions in North America.

The first of these books, *Punctured Preconceptions*, attempts to lay to rest modern clichés about church life which "just don't stand up." By 'modern clichés' the authors seem largely to mean the empirical findings of social scientists. While the study is purportedly a study of nearly 3,500 clergy and laity in the United States and Canada, not a single iota of methodological data is offered.

As for content, the reported findings are so at variance with the findings of organizations such as Gallup, Harris, NORC, and the Social Research Center at Berkeley — as well as with those of independent investigators — that the differences can only be explained by either a grossly unrepresentative sample, a massive fudging of data to fit the authors' arguments, or, as I prefer to believe, a result of the authors' simply not knowing what they are doing. In any event, an important National Council of Churches publication reviewed the book in glowing terms. On the other hand, the review in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* directed its attention to methodological inadequacies and concluded the book was "incompetent."

I catalog these examples not as a diatribe but as illustrations of a widespread exercise by church leaders to avoid careful analysis of church life and direction. Indeed, the mounting of rationales for the pull-back from social justice concerns is tantamount to a cover-up. Because church leaders went about their commitments with only limited concern for their own constituencies, because they failed to appreciate the magnitude of the problems or the immense difficulty in bringing about

social change, because they didn't plan and strategize well enough — they now have done a total about-face and disclaimed the ideals and theology of the 1960s or at least their priority status. When the moral problems of our society were unmasked to reveal their true size, they were too large.

### Healthy Shifts

The retreat of the churches is not viewed this way by church leaders, however. For them, the current shifts are basically sound and healthy. It is far easier, humanly, to interpret anything as good than to view it as bad. When things are good, one can simply follow along as the natural course goes; when things are bad — or at least doubtful — one must worry about changing the course, turning the tide. Today the rhetoric of good health is abundant in church periodicals; the obvious losses in membership, attendance, and finances are reinterpreted to mean a separation of the chaff from the wheat or a pruning away to reinvigorate the tree. We hear of the rising involvement of the laity, the recognition of women, the decentralization of authority structures. In reality these are simply repercussions to the over-zealous social activism indulged in by clergy in the 1960s. Laity have assumed power and have forced more local level decision-making as a means of bringing the Church in line with their perceptions of what it ought to be doing. I don't suggest that a little more democracy is bad for the churches — but I do say the leadership is now cheering on this development as a face-saving measure to avoid confronting the real issues.

The churches' cover-up of their problems involves basically two things. First is the ignoring of basic "vital statistics" about the life inside mainline Protestantism. We know there has been a rapid, recent decline in membership and attendance, and we have no indicators of a leveling off of this trend. And yet church researchers busy themselves publishing data which show church membership higher than 20 years ago. This is to ignore what's critical: namely that gains are being made among conservative groups, and this in no way bodes well for mainline denominations. It is one thing to embrace ecumenism, but quite another to take consolation in the strengthening of fundamentalist groups while moderate and liberal bodies are losing ground.

As another illustration of good health, we are cited the headcount of seminarians. While Catholics have problems in this area, Protestant bodies are faring well. The



problem here is that mere numbers mean little. Much seminary enrollment expansion in recent years can be accounted for by two basic and simple reasons: (1) draft-dodgers and (2) women. Even so, if we presume a large number of these students will indeed pursue clerical careers, more, rather than fewer problems arise. How will the churches support this personnel?

Then, there is the second major division of the cover-up: the abandonment of mission and revision of theology. In the 1960s, mainline Protestant leadership believed people were here as instruments for carrying out the Lord's work of achieving justice, peace, and brotherhood. Today, by ignoring internal problems of diminution of strength and viability, church leaders aren't even shouldering the work of preserving their institutional base.

In the wake of the backlash to social activism, clergy have largely acquiesced to a more pietistic, comforting mission for the churches. The withdrawal has been massive and rapid, with only scattered protest and resistance.

When Harvey Cox spoke of the New Breed of clergymen as being part of a long tradition in the American theological heritage, he was absolutely correct. There was more to the activist theology than a civil rights fad; its roots can be traced far back into the history of religious thought in this country. And the New Breed were not all young clergy born out of the civil rights struggle either, but also included older men who came out of World War II with a new perspective of the stronger roots of church mission defined in dedication to a better world. The question becomes one of how durable is the cover-up?

There seems, however, to be a setback to this in the types of persons now entering seminaries. By several indicators they appear largely to be of a different ilk: more pietistic, more inner-directed, almost unconcerned with social issues. If this is true, what is happening will build into the churches a totally different consciousness. Structuring in a leadership which has never embraced the theology of mission directed toward the redemption of society and has never had the devastation of a world war or of national struggles for social justice to impinge on its thinking is fortifying the other-worldly role of the church. It is abnegation of the challenge for moral leadership. The possible exception in the seminaries is the number of women, and the possibility that their consciousness looks to wider horizons than their male

counterparts'. But it is far too soon to measure this, and far too late to sit back and count on it.

### Signs of Impotence

The two years of Watergate agony the nation has recently endured provide evidence of the churches' relinquishment of moral leadership. Where were church voices calling for the ferreting out of truth and raising ethical questions about the use of power? Is the church so morally bankrupt that it can't even raise its voice, let alone lift its feet? Were clergy afraid to speak — did the electoral plurality mean more than principles? It wasn't necessary to pass judgment on individuals to deal with broad issues of integrity, responsibility, honesty, honor. That Protestantism largely stood mute in the face of this national tragedy is just one more indication of impotence. Our democratic structures seem to have well survived — even perhaps been strengthened — by the ordeal, but the churches only lent further testimony to their declining leadership position.

Effective leadership of any sort must meet certain criteria. If its goal is social change, the primary prerequisites are three: first, there must be strong predisposition and commitment to effect the desired changes; second, the operational base must be an environment which does not inherently preclude change; and, third, those attempting to be change agents must possess the requisite skills. The clergy of the 1960s did not significantly change lay attitudes and behavior — why?

That so many clergy put their own necks on the line suggests a broad base of commitment on many levels, in many diverse places. The structural preconditions are harder to assess, but American religion has deep roots in social concerns, and Christianity itself began as a radical social change movement. My own view is that the major cause of the unfulfilled dreams of clergy in the 1960s was their own lack of skills and strategies to accomplish their goals. And this, I underscore, is a failing which can be corrected, if the desire remains.

So what will happen in the years to come? And where will the churches stand in working out the evolution of human society on this planet? We needn't be prophets to predict there are difficult times and monumental problems ahead. The issues which kindled national dissension over the past 20 years have not been resolved, though for the moment the noise is slightly subdued. And on a global level we are only beginning to see the

signals and feel the repercussions of problems predicted for many decades now: over-population, starvation, inflation, environmental destruction, energy shortages.

I believe survival is possible, and even that a more humane and peaceful existence for all people can be achieved. I'm not sure we can pull it off, but with concern, care, conviction, commitment — and a bit of good luck — I think it is not already too late. And I also think that, with their heritage, their mission, and their institutional base, the churches are needed to play a very critical role. The question, however, remains whether the undercurrent of American religion can get the power of its people back in the action. Or will the churches continue to treat national and global pathologies with band-aids? Will they be satisfied nursing the malaria victims, or will they try to do something about the swamp?

**Jeffrey K. Hadden:** acting chairman, Department of Sociology, University of Virginia.

Adapted from the Lilly Endowment Lectures on Religion, October, 1974.

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# Response from Inside

by William P. Thompson

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I find myself in reluctant agreement with the primary thrust of Mr. Hadden's statement. The agreement comes because I believe he has pointed to a very serious issue in the current life of American Protestantism. The reluctance comes because I fear that the interpretive framework he has developed to explain the situation may obscure rather than clarify attempts to deal with it.

Let me be specific. Religious involvement in the struggle for social justice in the 1960s was simply not as massive and pervasive as Mr. Hadden implies. The image of clergy in America . . . as bold leaders in the vanguard of social change was largely just that — image. It was

created by a combination of media concentration on two specific national convulsions, the civil rights movement and the Vietnam agony; by the highly visible and widely publicized involvement of a relatively small minority of religious leaders; and by a few dramatic controversies within religious groups over specific projects: FIGHT in Rochester, a small contribution to the Angela Davis Defense Fund, etc. Religious groups themselves fostered this false image by overblown rhetoric that ascribed significance to the extent and achievements of some modest efforts far beyond the capacities and resources committed.

I do not discount the promise of those days nor the hopes that I and others held that they presaged a growing commitment, a possibility for permanent effect on the institutional planning and priorities of America's religious groups. But hope is hope precisely because it is not reality. I think we must be more realistic about how far we had really come if we are to deal intelligently with the present retreat and the strategies for future advance.

In addition, I find the schema of clergy activism-lay reaction-clergy retreat-lay victory far too simplistic. "Laity have assumed power . . . bringing the church in line with their perceptions of what it ought to be doing." Anyone who was there in the 1960s knows that a lot of the laity were alongside some of the clergy in those struggles, without collars but full of the same faith. And we also know that a great many of the clergy were never there and did not think it right that others were. It was a member of the laity who stood before a United Presbyterian General Assembly and said of the Vietnam War: "As a lawyer, I say it is unconstitutional. As a former military officer, I say it is stupid. As a Christian, I say it is immoral." He was elected Moderator by an Assembly composed equally of laity and clergy. When I, a member of the laity, fasted for a week in front of the White House in protest of that war, the opposition letters came quite as much from the clergy as from the laity.

## Inherent Fallibility

The struggle in the church for the faith has not been and is not a struggle between clergy and laity. It is between two views of the function of faith in this world and of the differing views of mission that spring from them. There were and are both clergy and laity on both sides. I believe that this controversy need not be bitterly divisive if those on both sides recognize their inherent fallibility and seek to maintain an open fellowship



respecting each other as equally committed to the one Lord of the Church.

Finally, the assertion that "the major cause of the unfulfilled dreams of the clergy in the 1960s was their own lack of skills and strategies to accomplish their goals" strikes me as oversimplification to the point of shallowness. There were and will be, of course, errors in judgment and examples of incompetence. However, the implication that methodological expertise would have enabled the activists to achieve the Kingdom of God which Mr. Hadden describes as their goal — or even some of the more proximate goals of social justice — and forestall the reaction of the laity (and clergy) who opposed such activity denies both the complexity and intractability of the problems and the strength and durability of the resistance.

There is simply no way by which the Church can treat national and global pathologies effectively, as Mr. Hadden and I both deeply desire, and keep the church free from conflict. Careful strategy and competent planning and implementation can minimize the conflict and the losses (as well as maximize effectiveness); but there is still a direct correlation between the magnitude of the change earnestly sought and the magnitude of the sense of alienation on the part of some. Part of our confusion today, and part of the self-deception that Mr. Hadden rightly deplores, is the position held by too many that there can be effective social witness without conflict and alienation. I fear that Mr. Hadden may have inadvertently given support to that position.

In brief, I feel that Mr. Hadden is rendering a verdict before the trial is over. We are still trying to assess the evidence on the experience of the church — and the society — in the 1960s, and on the various reactions to it. More important, we are still trying to evaluate what we learned about style, aims, and obedience. It is not wholly a time of recuperation from exhaustion; a great deal is still happening. Less dramatic, less visible, possibly as effective, or even more so. And we are groping for a future in which our prophetic obedience will be more deeply rooted in the whole life of the Church than ever before. I personally appreciate the stimulus provided by Mr. Hadden and others in this task.

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**William P. Thompson:** Stated Clerk, General Assembly, United Presbyterian Church.

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# Response from Outside

by Lynda Ann Ewen

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Mr. Hadden's article clearly states the internal contradictions which face mainline Protestantism today and he makes a forceful plea for an objective analysis of what has happened. My own experiences in the struggle for the survival of an inner city radical Protestant church in Detroit essentially bear out Mr. Hadden's analysis, as far as he takes it.

Mr. Hadden suggests that "the major cause of the unfulfilled dreams of clergy in the 1960s was their own lack of skills and strategies to accomplish their goals." What were the dreams and what were the missing skills and strategies? Mr. Hadden strongly states his optimism that there is an answer to that question, and yet his article gives little guidance as to where the answer might be found and what it might look like.

Internal contradictions within the Church are certainly an aspect of the dilemma, but cannot be understood without expanding the analysis in terms of the wider forces of which the Church is a part, including the changes which have occurred between the 1960s and the 1970s. There is the almost complete failure of the much-touted liberal programs to eradicate poverty and the failure to end imperialist wars like Vietnam or reduce crime. The liberal failure at home has been accompanied by the failure of the "peaceful transition" abroad — the bloody coup in Chile is an adequate example of the unwillingness of corporate capital to relinquish its stranglehold on a people, no matter how "democratically" some of its leadership promises the transition to socialism to be. There has been a deepening economic crisis which has meant skyrocketing inflation, soaring unemployment, bank failures, worsening working conditions for those still employed and an acceleration of the crime rate. The response to this crisis by the government, acting in the interest of business, has been to reinforce police agencies, pass more repressive legislation against strikes and demonstrations,

launch a massive propaganda campaign blaming unemployment on "illegal aliens" and brutal deportations. For the first time in the history of this country neither the President nor Vice-President has been elected by the people, and the Vice-President is none other than a member of the wealthiest and most powerful family in the world. Henry Kissinger is rattling the sabre of U.S. military might at the Arabs and threatening a war — a way of getting out of recession and depression that is as American as apple pie!

I doubt that Mr. Hadden would deny any of this, and indeed his article is based on the premise that these are precisely the reasons why today's Church cannot retreat from the field of social activism. But the objective conditions around the Church must be put together with the internal contradictions of the Church.

The fact that U.S. society is a class society, dominated by corporate and financial interests is hardly disputable. But Mr. Hadden sees the contradiction between clergy and laity as something other than a reflection of those same class contradictions. Those who control the church financially are those who have historically used the church to defend given property relationships — not to change them! The defeat of liberalism in the church came from precisely those same class forces which defeated it in the society in general — when the "aspirin" failed and the failure was exposed, the vested interests had no choice but to withdraw and demand that the patient be silenced rather than cured.

Because the clergy and progressive laity continually saw the problems of the 1960s as issues but rarely connected them in any systematic analysis, it was inevitable that the very contradictions between working class people which are generated in the society at large were duplicated internally within the church. White workers who daily faced bodily injury from poisonous chemicals or ran the danger of having their fingers cut off by repeating presses resented the concern of the Church for everyone else but them (as well as being told that the ills of society were their "fault"); men felt threatened by the influx of women demanding jobs at precisely a time when jobs were becoming scarce; old people felt neglected by the church's concern for all those "hippies" when their needs for medical care and decent nursing home care were largely ignored.

In other words, attacking an issue without an analysis as to why the struggle of industrial workers, black people, the Vietnamese, and women are fundamentally

one and the same is to further divide and alienate those who must be united. This unity cannot, however, be forged on the basis of moral concern and guilt. It must be practically demonstrated and shown through education that the repression and exploitation of the majority in the society has a common source and that there is a solution. The economic roots of white chauvinism, male supremacy, and the bribe of technical and professional workers must be exposed in order to create unity, not guilt. There must be a concrete program to fight to restore democratic rights in the federal, state and local government, democracy in the now co-opted trade unions, and to prevent imperialist wars abroad.

There is no question but that progressive people in the churches face hard choices — many correctly perceive that the alternatives essentially boil down to either fascism or socialism. The New Leftists of the 1960s that formulated vague utopias for the future are now being replaced by serious Marxist-Leninists who are taking on the long-range and difficult task of uniting the working class around concrete programs and of eventually building a society that transforms the technological capacity of this corrupt society for the development of human beings and not profit. The Church will ultimately have to split on this issue — for essentially these are the choices. Progressive laity and clergy will have to unite in activity with serious communists. One can only hope that church people will not wait as long as those of Hitler's Germany to understand the class nature of the struggle, as well as the tremendous possibilities that the future holds if the correct choices are made.

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# Network Reports

## Network Regional Meetings Held

**Central South** — The Church and Society Network expanded into the Central South region with an initiating meeting in Atlanta, March 3-4. The 19 persons attending came from varied church backgrounds and with diverse involvements, some with a church-in-exile community; some from very conservative situations.

This diversity spawned discussion on whether persons with such differences can form a group capable of supporting one another. Another question raised was whether the ordination of women needs to be dealt with by itself or linked with deeper issues.

Each member was asked to assemble a group in his/her area to look at the social mission of the Church in the next three months. Some committed themselves to this; others questioned what they can realistically do in their areas. The freedom of the individual was stressed, the freedom to work according to the person's conscience, and the freedom to participate in the support group or to choose not to.

Participating in the Atlanta meeting were David Fisher, and Archie Stapleton, Tennessee; Marion and Elizabeth Hoag, Sr. Jean Campbell, Georgia; Kathryn and Harcourt Waller, Martha Carmichael, Frank Vest and Lex Matthews, North Carolina; Kathleen and Bill Chilton, Mark Johnston, Alabama; Sara McCorry and Robert Dunbar, Upper South Carolina; Ed Hartley, Western North Carolina.—*Marion Hoag*, communicator

**Pacific North West** — Members of the Church and Society Network met in Seattle March 16-17 for the second time. The fact of our meeting is a statement of our need and faith. Our need is for mutual support against feelings of isolation and powerlessness. Our faith requires us to act to remind the Church of the social issues outside its doors.

There is a clear commitment from the members of this group to the principles at stake in the ordination of

women, and we issued a statement to the local Seattle press affirming our unanimous support for an open priesthood. But we agreed that our methods of action would be different in our several areas since we are divided on both legalities and on the use of the issue as an organizing tactic.

We worked on the definition of the Network we want to build and the role of *The Witness* in the Network. We believe the faith we profess demands an expression in action in the secular world where we see people hungry, unfulfilled, powerless and living lives that fail to fulfill their human potential. We believe our Church is dangerously attracted to either a passive separateness from these problems or to a triumphant response only to issues that co-opt.

We want to speak and act in ways that lead to meaningful change. We believe the Network can be a pooling of strengths and resources. We have pledged to organize, to act and to use *The Witness* as our link with the larger national Network that is emerging.

The magazine should give more voice to the voiceless, to keep the remote in touch with each other and to help us fit the specifics of our local problems. Cabel Tennis, Seattle, was elected coordinator for the region. Alice Dieter, communicator. Those present at the meeting were: Cabel Tennis, Seattle; Diane Tickell, Auke Bay, Alaska; Henry Morrison and Elizabeth Sullivan, Moscow, Idaho; Alice Dieter, Robert Browne and Wendell Peabody, Boise, Idaho; James Brumbaugh, John Huston, Marge Jodoin, Seattle, Washington; Bruce Barnes, Pendleton, Oregon; John Larson, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Robert DeWitt, Ambler, Pennsylvania; and Hugh White, Detroit, Michigan.

**Midwest** — What is the Church and Society Network? How do the networks in a region fit together? Where are the individual networks in our region in terms of the struggle with the social concerns each is facing? Where do we go from here? These were some of the questions dealt with by Church and Society networks from the Dioceses of Indianapolis, Michigan and Chicago March 14-15 in Indianapolis with Robert DeWitt and Hugh White. Due to heavy storms those coming from Ohio and Southern Ohio were unable to attend.

We began the task by exchanging the histories of the networks present. Without denying the diversity of the groups we quickly recognized some emerging patterns in the local concerns: racism, sexism, classism, world and



domestic hunger, education, power and exploitation. As the evening ended, we added the question of Network interdependence in terms of resources and support.

The next morning, Robert DeWitt shared with us the Statement of Affirmation and Invitation regarding women's ordination which appeared in the March 9 issue of *The Witness*. What followed was a discussion of the broader implications of the article in relation to the Church's process of dealing with the social issues with which it is confronted.

We then met as individual networks to discuss the issue of women's ordination as a possibility for our diocesan networks' thrust. In plenary session, we shared our varying degrees of commitment to women's ordination as well as the concern of world and domestic hunger. With the umbrella concept as our point of reference, we discussed the feasibility of multiple issues for our diocesan networks' focus.

On the question of network interdependence in terms of resources we listed the skills, talents and centers of influence of each participant.

There was no necessity to answer the question of network support in the climate of trust that had steadily developed during our time together. Our diversity was accepted and our risk-taking as person was affirmed, so that in the on-going struggle to relate church and society, each of us is not alone.—*Sue Quimby*, coordinator

### Hunger Training Session Held in Denver

Denver was the site of the first of two nation-wide efforts by the Episcopal Church to organize a parish, grass-roots response to world hunger. Presiding Bishop Allin has acknowledged that "increasingly the problem is one of the equitable distribution of scarce global resources; hence the need for discovering together necessary fundamental social, political and economic changes."

One sincerely hopes he realizes the depth to which this

is going to be necessary, and that he will have the backbone to stand behind his words when that happens. As a national church staff member said, a serious attempt by the Church to address the root causes of world hunger is going to be more divisive and controversial to the Church than any of the civil rights, justice and peace issues of the late 1960s.

What happened at Denver? There were some excellent presentations, especially on domestic hunger, and by the Latin delegation. But the "right words" and the penetrating analyses have been given many times before, even from bishops. One had the feeling that even though we heard the words and the analysis eagerly and responded vigorously, we but dimly perceive the cost to ourselves and our church constituencies that a serious consideration of the problem of world hunger will entail.

In the first place, how will some diocesan bishops respond to the discreet offer by provincial leaders to come in and train diocesan leadership, especially if the need for institutional change (both church and secular) is laid clearly on the line?

Secondly, will it be understood that the global hunger issue is so intimately a part of our own lifestyle, and more importantly, of the way our economic and governmental institutions function? What will some bishops and rectors do, for instance, when our research on agribusiness and multinational corporations indicates that profound aspects of these institutions need to be boldly confronted? It is so easy to cut out meat one day a week and give more money to the Presiding Bishop's Fund!

Perhaps the most important and long-range task that the more aware provincial team leaders might undertake is that of helping some diocesan leaders begin to discover how to build long-lasting alliances between small church groups and secular community groups so that together these might form the nucleus of a long-range, serious commitment to the kind of institutional change that is necessary if the institutions are to be transformed and the hungry fed.—*Richard Gillett*, All Saints, Pasadena, CA

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