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# THE WITNESS

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## Can Local Democracy Work?

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# Letters to the Editor

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

## Hurrah for Stringfellow

I want to say "Amen" and "Hurrah" to Bill Stringfellow's article, "The Church in Exile." "Amen" because this new church has life and creativity and the joy that is born out of suffering: it is alive.—*Flora A. Keshgegian, Philadelphia*

## Our Burden Is Indeed Heavy

I enjoy *The Witness* very much. More importantly — I really comprehend Episcopal overall budget problems as side effects of society. I am surrounded by budget deficiency which has existed ever since I was born; it paid for a war in Europe, Japan, Korea and Vietnam; it paid for and continues to be a portion of my debt for not only destruction of good earth but arms and legs and hands and hearts — for which I am responsible.—*Evelyn M. Sears, Los Angeles*

## Now Hear This

Dear Miss Brinley, Mrs. Ruegg, Miss Sheets and Mrs. Starr: This is in acknowledgement of your recent letter to the Presiding Bishop in which you raised certain questions after reading the article by Charles Ritchie in *The Witness*.

To answer one specific point of Mr. Ritchie's article in my own field — I would respond that the Executive Council followed specifically instructions of Convention in identifying a publication which will hopefully some day reach every Episcopal household and agreed that this was *The Episcopalian* itself in its new format.—*John C. Goodbody, Executive for communication, Executive Council of the Episcopal Church*

## Well, We Try

How kind and gentlemanly of you to say that you are "committed to the ordination of women because resolving that issue leads into the deepest concerns of the social mission of the church."

Try to get it into your heads that my sisters, in their own way, are seeking to give one half the human race a

voice with which to address God. I pray that the God who is not male (nor female) will give us all grace for the breaking of idols.—*Jan Adams, San Francisco*

## Good Show

I just read the March 23 issue of *The Witness* from cover to cover. It's the first time I've done this. It was really good! I had been afraid that *The Witness* would be too much of a head trip . . . but this one seemed to be hitting some issues that are very important. I just wish more people could see it because nobody else seems to be discussing the budget as you did, as well as the Missouri election process.—*The Rev. William B. Gray, Trinity Church, NYC*

## A Friendly Comment

How can I say that while I rejoice in what you are trying to do in bringing the Church into a deeper relationship with the world in which it lives, I also find immensely disappointing some of your comments about that world? I cringe at your narrow perspective in reducing complex issues to such simplistic black and white formulae. Yet you have the courage to speak boldly to deep concerns that are otherwise neglected in our time. Please regard this as a friendly comment.—*The Rev. Frederick Quinn, Washington*

## Ordination, A Trap?

I fear that the Episcopal women seeking ordination to the priesthood are walking into traps. Make no mistake, I applaud their desire to be ordained, and would be delighted to have a woman as my pastor.

As women become ordained I feel the doors being closed behind to their lay sisters, in much the same manner that clergymen have closed doors to real lay ministry. It is this unspoken feeling that some ministries are better or more important than others. Clerical and lay ministries go hand in hand. I guess I would plead with everyone — ordained or not, man or woman — that the sacerdotal functions which go on in a church setting are only symbolic of the work of the Lord by and with people in the real world.—*D. Emily Brown, Berkeley*



# THE WITNESS

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## Who Was The Defendant?

by Robert L. DeWitt

The script for the trial in Washington of the Rev. William Wendt — was it written by Lewis Carroll or Franz Kafka? Or did Gilbert and Sullivan dream up this daffy theatrical bit with its five black-robed judges acting as both judge and jury? It was hard to tell.

Who was on trial? Even the answer to that question was not obvious. Was Father Wendt the only defendant? Or was a whole era in the life of the Episcopal Church being judged? Appearances suggested the former, reality the latter. Here were the sensible 70s sitting in judgment on the wacky 60s.

Few remember the 60s. That was the time when the cry was for "peace and justice," not "peace and quiet." That was the time when church hierarchies, of all things, gave their blessing to some forms of social action. That was time when young radicals, middle-aged liberals and elder statespersons (we almost said . . . ) were joined in a (lower case) common cause.

Some observers said the solemn ceremonies at St. Columba's Church resembled a funeral rite. Perhaps this tone was created by the presence of those who came to notarize the death certificates of causes they once felt constrained to love.

But somehow the roles got reversed. The corpses were more lively than the mourners. The accusers were defensive. And the defense rested — a sabbath rest. It was a case of justification by faith alone.

What about the verdict? With the insouciance born of a Resurrection faith, one can only say, "who cares?" No Christian in his or her Christian mind would be tempted to take seriously such foolishness.

As liturgy, this mock funeral was ersatz. As theater, it was tragedy that inadvertently became bad comedy. As an exercise in church discipline, it was a study in flabbiness. In short, if it weren't all so sad and pathetic, it would be nothing but a laughing matter.

Justice, which "cried aloud" in the 60s, is crying softly in the 70s. Its cries are muffled because it has gone underground. But it is not dead. And it can't be buried forever.

# The World's Most Radical Notion

by James M. Campbell

The most radical notion loose in the world today is that ordinary people can govern themselves. It is not new. Its seeds are in the ancient Greek polis or community of citizens. Augmented by early Christian ideas and practices of equality, honed by later egalitarian philosophers, this conviction was a strong plank in the American, French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions — though, in each case, it soon was greatly changed or was eliminated.

Ordinary people governing themselves is the idea behind efforts for worker participation in factory decision-making. But the focus of this article is the residential community and urban government, where for the last decade the idea has slowly been accepted that people in the neighborhoods of our large cities can and should decide neighborhood matters. Examples include the “maximum feasible participation” factor in the Community Action Program in 1964; the press for “community control of schools and the community” by black power groups in the late 1960s, and the 1973 revision of Detroit’s city charter allowing the establishment of elected community councils with substantive governing power.

But isn’t local democracy what America has been all about since the beginnings of the Republic? Sure . . . shot through, of course, with racism, sexism, and economic elitism. But even white male democracy has been missing the last 50 to 75 years where our population has been highly concentrated — in our large cities. Today all adults have suffrage, but large city residents continue, to all intents and purposes, to be disenfranchised. Only by emptying the phrase of any real meaning can we speak of the city governments of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, as

“local government.” Detroit, for instance, which is the fifth “largest” city (meaning the fifth largest sized population governed by a “local” government) has a mayor and a nine-member council governing a population larger than that of 16 of the states!

It is small wonder that citizens of Detroit and other cities think “local” government is far-removed from them. It is! Small wonder that urbanites feel powerless, their lives controlled by faceless bureaucrats and politicians unaccountable to them. They are!

But slowly things are changing. Slowly we are realizing with Harvey Shapiro of “Citizens for Local Democracy” that “a community without power is not a community; it is merely a collection of individuals.” Often they are cynical, fearful, lonely individuals as well.

Slowly we are realizing there is little reason why citizens in urban “sub-communities” of 25,000 to 100,000 in population should not decide or substantively participate in decisions regarding such matters as zoning, street maintenance, environmental and police protection, education, health and welfare and housing.

## The Base Is Local

Of course, city-wide government is needed to handle matters that affect the whole city or are more practically administered on a broader base — mass transportation, for example, and water supply, utilities, sewage disposal. And we will continue to need county, state, and national government, the United Nations, and maybe some day an Inter-Planetary Council! But the base of democracy is local government. Town, suburban, and rural Americans take it for granted. In our cities ranging in population from 200,000 to 8 million, democracy has been lost or has never existed until the current movement for citizen participation comes into being.

But the forces resisting democracy in the cities are formidable. Who or what are they?

First, there are those already in power or whose jobs depend on keeping the status quo. Though they may agree with an out-going mayor who pronounced his city “ungovernable,” the un-governing will nevertheless stay in their hands, by God, along with any benefits in status, control of other persons and material and material rewards! There will be no “balkanization,” they say, no “breaking up of this great city,” no surrender of decision-making to “petty politicians in neighborhood fiefdoms.” (Though any one of those neighborhoods probably is larger in population than any surrounding and self-governing suburban municipality.)

Such were the arguments and actual phrases used by city officials and large newspapers in opposing the "community government" provisions of the new Detroit charter. Often the city officials in power are supported behind the scenes by economic elites who, although enjoying the right to and the benefits of local self-government in the suburban communities where they drive home every night, are unwilling for blacks, other minority groups, and less affluent whites in the city to enjoy the same right and benefits.

At the theoretical level, opponents of neighborhood government argue from a "zero-sum" understanding of power. The more power you have, the less I have. Like copper or uranium, and unlike knowledge, beauty, love and even wealth and productivity, there's only so much power around. Therefore, a strong mayor or council requires a weak people — docile, dependent, obedient.

It's a rare city official who believes that vital, self-governing neighborhoods can actually enhance the power of the city and strengthen the hands of the mayor and council in fighting crime and poverty, beautifying the environment, raising the quality of schools and developing the city economically. Increasing numbers of citizen groups across urban America, however, believe that without such neighborhood involvement our cities will indeed be ungovernable. The alternatives then will become anarchistic terror or a police state.

### **Is Big Better?**

A second force opposing democracy within our cities is the "bigger the better" myth. Pointing to the economies achieved in the mass production and distribution of commodities, defenders of this argument say that, similarly, the larger a city government is, the more efficient and less expensive it will be. Local community control of services such as sanitation, police, and recreation will be inefficient and expensive — so goes the argument. Ignoring the totalitarian implications of such an argument, I contend that what's true of commodities is not automatically true of human beings and their political processes. In fact, a recent study of a large city and several of its immediate suburbs, revealed that per capita expenditures for sanitation, police protection, and parks and recreation were significantly greater in the city than in the suburbs studied. At the same time the satisfaction of residents with those services in the city was far less than that in the suburbs. "Large is expensive and unsatisfactory" seems to be truer than "the bigger the better" when applied to many city services.

One reason for this is found in the nature of large bureaucracies. The public servants who work there soon become accountable not to the public but only to their superiors and peers. Increasingly, administrators and employees direct their energies not to getting the job done but to the internal rivalries and fights, conquests and cover-ups, and the resulting multiplication of positions, assistant positions, forms, procedures, and sheer paper of bureaucracy. Those persons actually performing the tasks for which the department or agency was formed are usually the lowest paid and become increasingly indifferent to their work as a great superstructure continually restrains, defines, polices, evaluates, and reorganizes what they do. The wonder is that anything gets done at all.

A third force resisting democracy is elitism. Elitism calls for government by experts — people whose knowledge or training supposedly makes them more fit to determine what is good for a community, even if they live in Washington, and the question is what to do with the vacant HUD house on my block in Detroit. Elitists assume the calumny that ordinary folk don't know what's good for them.

Elitists are not just the members of the Athletic Club, or the entrenched political powers. Elitists include liberals who want to help the poor but resist having the poor define what help means. Elitists include planners who want to control the planning and what it is that needs to be planned. Elitists include leftists who speak frequently of the masses but believe only a handful of people are "ideologically correct" enough to decide anything.

### **We Need Experts**

Fortunately the Watergate affair has expanded our doubts as to whom can be trusted to make good decisions. And Vietnam revealed the kind of twisted purposes which the best and brightest leaders can set for a people and helped shatter our faith in any elites. The potential energy of politically involved citizens makes urban democracy desirable; healthy cynicism about elites makes it a necessity.

We need experts. We need trained, skilled people who can help communities, cities, and nations meet the needs of their citizenry and achieve the "goods" which people seek for themselves.

We need different levels of government and new forms of collaboration among otherwise autonomous governments. But basic to a democratic society is local



democracy. If we can't determine what's good for our neighborhood, small chance we'll long have a say in anything else.

We've looked at forces opposing democracy in our cities. Who are actual or potential supporters? Block clubs, community associations, minority empowerment groups, ethnic groups, conservatives who really believe Thomas Jefferson, radicals who really believe in "power to the people," local citizen advisory groups who have discovered their "advising" doesn't make a hill of beans.

And urban churches! Some are involved. Many have given up on the city, retreating to traditional in-group rituals and functions or dying all together. The city and its problems proved too massive for the local church to deal with. With no viable community, no community ministry seemed feasible. Even those churches whose polity stressed geographic parish boundaries have lost a sense of "the parish."

Neighborhood government provides a new opportunity for local urban churches. Citizen participation can mean local church participation. Community issues can be graspable once again. Local churches can search for Biblical and theological insights into questions of justice and equity, which ultimately impinge on any human conflict, neighborhood or worldwide. There will be resistance. Maybe even from church officials and those big pastors who fancy themselves insiders in the machinations of urban oligarchies. But the opportunity is there for local churches to take their place in the continuum of struggle for human self-determination.

Slowly the opposition to democracy in our cities is being analyzed and answered. Gradually people are asserting their right to influence what happens in their communities, just as employees of large organizations are claiming a voice in the direction of their work communities.

Neighborhood government like democracy generally, is not a panacea. There is nothing that guarantees good decisions and there are always the dangers of provincialism, racism, and small town type oppression.

But if mistakes are made by neighborhood governments, at least we'll know whom to blame — and where to begin again. The power and the glory, the failures and the ignominy — all will be ours as we begin to take responsibility for our lives in that most basic arena — our local communities.

**James M. Campbell:** lives in Detroit; member, People's Council for Community Government; staff member, Detroit Industrial Mission.

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# Idaho Looks at Urban Scene

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A Response by Alice Dieter

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It really seems presumptuous for someone from Idaho to comment on the problem of democracy in cities. Presumptuous, not for lack of the democratic experience, but for lack of cities. By all of the population standards defining "metropolitan," we just don't qualify. The state population is less than one million people. Participation in government is open, access directly to the authorities is easy. The mayor, the governor, and even U.S. senators, are not remote and unresponsive.

In spite of this, however, people in Idaho have the same kinds of frustrations and resentments that are endemic in mass population centers. In Boise, the state capital, the largest city for hundreds of miles with a population of 98,000, there are those who are powerless, who have not been taught how to participate in government or who are vulnerable to the kinds of put-downs routinely handed anywhere to the newcomer, the poor, the different or the irritating.

I applaud Mr. Campbell's thesis. I think more and smaller, local government units are desirable. But they do not necessarily solve the problems of unequal participation. Furthermore, it is not easy to limit the concept of "community" to geography. And, most important, he says nothing about the basic problem of local power: the tax base.

I live far from South Boston, but what has been happening in neighborhood schools there concerns me. You may live far from the Idaho Primitive Area and the wild country of Hell's Canyon. But you have a stake in decisions about opening wilderness areas for logging or building dams on the last 55 miles of a wild river. It is hard to identify a truly "local" issue.

The people who live in the mountain communities near the White Clouds, for instance, were eager to have the growth the discovery of molybdenum promised eight years ago. A larger "community" of individuals, who do not live there but who felt they shared a heritage of the wilderness, blocked attempts by one of the nation's

largest corporations to develop a mine. Local people were angry. They felt the equivalent of local zoning rights had been violated, and there was serious talk of lynching card-carrying Sierra Club members.

But the real limitation on the power of local government is the lack of the power to tax and the limited value of the tax base available to the decision-making unit. What we all, urban and rural residents alike, have now, is taxation by large, remote units of government, leaving us less and less room for local decision-making. The larger unit manipulates local decisions with offers of money to the local level for "the right projects."

The project can be freeway building or kindergarten teaching. The important point is the decision that "x" project is "beneficial" is really made from on high, the money flows down, and local response is just that . . . response, not initiation. There is never a true local alternative, because there is not a local fiscal base of sufficient size to support it.

Plugging for local control without talking about how to fund it isn't facing the issue.

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**Alice Dieter:** editorial associate, Boise Cascade Corp.; veteran reporter on Idaho local government for newspapers, radio and TV.

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# Citizens and Government — Together

A Response by Kathryn Waller

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Mr. Campbell states that we, the people, have a right to participate in our governmental process. I suggest that as Christians we not only have a right, we have a duty to assist, advise, criticize, or do whatever is necessary to make government responsive to the needs of people. What else can government "of the people, by the people,

for the people" mean?

Somewhere along the way, though, I got the idea that getting involved with government was not nice. With the exception of a few gifted statesmen, we Episcopalians could best serve by raising and contributing money to worthwhile causes. This was the polite way to deal with problems, the only means a gentleman or lady would use.

Experience has convinced me, however, that money without commitment and personal involvement cannot feed the hungry, house the homeless, heal the sick, or stop the dehumanizing of our poor and powerless citizens. Even if money could do the job, is it conceivable that the Episcopal Church could release enough funds from its operating budget to meet the needs? Or is it conceivable that all the major denominations could forget their differences long enough to pool their resources? I think not. But if they did, could they meet the needs for longer than a day? With a population of over 210,000,000 many of our problems can only be dealt with by "Big Government." It is up to us to make "Big Government" personal, to ensure that in looking at the forest, it doesn't overlook the trees.

Let's look at a currently popular cause. Hunger. According to the 1970 census, there are 12 million Americans living in a constant state of hunger and malnutrition. While churches can and do offer valuable help through emergency funds, hot meals for the elderly, Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets, etc. this can only be considered a "band-aid" solution to the over-all problem. On the other hand, Congress has funded a program designed to insure a basic minimal diet to every American. This means three meals a day, seven days a week. So why do we have a hunger problem at all in this country?

In Charlotte, N.C. a small, organized, ecumenical group of Christians joined forces with a community-action agency to find the answer to that question. Their search led them into becoming involved in a large food stamp outreach effort which identified the poor, informed them of the availability of food assistance and helped determine their eligibility. At the end of this effort 20,000 persons had been added to the food stamp program and the local food stamp staff had been tripled. The results of the effort proved that when concerned citizens care enough to get involved a government program can be made to work. This is what democracy is all about.

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**Kathryn Waller:** Community of the Fellowship of Jesus.

# Why William Sloane Coffin Was Among Hartford 18

by David Gracie

Earlier this year 18 Christians of nine denominations gathered in Hartford, Connecticut to issue "An Appeal for Theological Affirmation." They said they were concerned about "an apparent loss of a sense of the transcendent" in the Church; so they isolated and condemned 13 teachings which they believe are undermining that sense:

1) Modern thought is superior to all past forms of understanding reality, and is therefore normative for Christian faith and life.

2) Religious statements are totally independent of reasonable discourse.

3) Religious language refers to human experience and nothing else, God being humanity's noblest creation.

4) Jesus can only be understood in terms of contemporary models of humanity.

5) All religions are equally valid; the choice among them is not a matter of conviction about truth but only of personal preference or life-style.

6) To realize one's potential and to be true to oneself is the whole meaning of salvation.

7) Since what is human is good, evil can adequately be understood as failure to realize human potential.

8) The sole purpose of worship is to promote individual self-realization and human community.

9) Institutions and historical traditions are oppressive and inimical to our being truly human; liberation from them is required for authentic existence and authentic religion.

10) The world must set the agenda for the Church. Social, political and economic programs to improve the quality of life are ultimately normative for the Church's mission in the world.

11) An emphasis on God's transcendence is at least a minor hindrance to, and perhaps incompatible with, Christian social concern and action.

12) The struggle for a better humanity will bring about the Kingdom of God.

13) The question of hope beyond death is irrelevant or at best marginal to the Christian understanding of human fulfillment.

The "Appeal" comments on these "false Themes." Sometimes the commentary calls for social commitment; e.g. "it is precisely because of confidence in God's reign over all aspects of life that Christians must participate fully in the struggle against oppressive and dehumanizing structures." Nevertheless, it struck many as a reactionary document.

Some people were surprised to learn that the Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr. was on the Hartford 18. Especially those who have grown accustomed to looking to Coffin for inspiration and guidance during the years of anti-war protest. Why was he, of all people, involved in helping to cook up this syllabus of errors? I went to Yale to ask him. It turned out that we had quite different views of the meaning of it all.

**Gracie:** What were you saying at Hartford? "It is God who has made us and not we ourselves?"

**Coffin:** I'll tell you, David, the first thesis that was sent around by Dick Neuhaus and Peter Berger I thought sounded very reactionary, which bothered me, coming from them. And they said, "Now, you understand, this is not supposed to be anti-left." And I said, "I understand and I don't care how much you suppose it not to be anti-left and anti-progress, but that's exactly how it's going to sound. If you want to talk about theses that are really pervasive and troubling the American soul I could come up with a few like nationalism, love of power, blaming the victims of society. All these kinds of things, it seems to me, are far more crucial." But they didn't buy that, and then I began to see what they were really after was the recovery of the transcendent, that it *is* God who has made us and not we ourselves. At that point, I thought, this is fairly obvious, so why the big deal? But once again Neuhaus and Berger said, "Well, maybe you don't understand, but this is going to be a big thing." And



I said, "It's not even going to make a little ripple." And they said, "Why don't you shut up, Coffin, and come to the conference?" So the chance to be with a bunch of theologians was pretty tempting. I'd never spent 48 hours with those minds and they were very impressive. I think, on balance, the theses were not anti-modern. I wanted a statement in there that we want to be free from modernity in order to be free for the future, but that didn't get in. But I think, on balance, we got a few social concerns in there, so it seemed to me it wasn't anti-progress. Now, where I was wrong, and where you may be wrong, is in thinking that this wouldn't make much difference to anybody. Simply because my name was mentioned in *Time* I must have received close to 100 letters, mostly from lay folk and ministers in small areas throughout the country. They think this is a very important statement. Now, why they think it's important is not clear to me. Do they think it's important because they have their own right-wing purposes for this, or do they want to say, "Give me that old-time religion" in a rather unproductive, nostalgic way? I just don't know. Finally, one more quick answer to your question is that one of the reasons I didn't think it was a big deal was that I thought the corner on transcendence, if you will, had been turned a few years ago on the experiential level, through liturgy, meditation and all these things that have been going on, and all that we were doing was kind of validating this term by giving it theological respectability. But it's certain that we said nothing that the church hasn't said all along, and I'm still very surprised it was necessary to repeat the obvious. Apparently it was.

Gracie: But *Time* magazine picked it up and stressed, I thought, the anti-left dimension, which, even though it's not spelled out in so many words, must certainly have reflected the prevailing mood.

Coffin: No, it wasn't at the conference, it really wasn't. I think *Time* was looking for controversy. They mentioned Harvey Cox. I told Harvey, "We never mentioned you. Not because we don't love you, but simply because we weren't singling you out as a target."

Gracie: My sense is that it will tend to be used against the liberation theologians and others, who, out of the struggle they are involved in with the poor and the disinherited, are trying to give ex-

pression to the faith. My fear is that it will hurt that way. It may hurt the women's movement, too. Were any women involved at Hartford?

Coffin: Yes, there were two very active women participants. And there certainly was never any sexist aspect which was troublesome to anybody. How do you see that as being troublesome to the women's movement?

Gracie: Well, I think of Mary Daly and *Beyond God the Father*. Any people or any group that is involved in that kind of liberation struggle searches for new ways of talking about ultimate reality. And the new ways they find are conditioned, of course, by their own struggle. People who are against the struggle can put it down by dumping on the new forms of religious expression.

Coffin: Well, look at it this way. I'm not sure about the importance of theological statements anyhow. You were saying, "Look, these people are faithful, they're doing something for the poor." I say, "Amen"; why don't we make that the test of fidelity rather than whether they stand up and pledge allegiance to all the transcendent aspects of God?

But I think the recovery of tradition and the sense of the transcendent dimension of God and how glorious and awesome He is could give us an enormous impetus to really change things much more radically on the face of the earth. Let's see if we can't get a radical sense of transcendence together with a radical politics. That seems to me where the future of the church lies — spirituality and politics. And a radical sense of transcendence can give you as much impetus for redeeming this earth as the kind of liberation theology which might sound more Marxist than transcendent; so it depends on how it is going to be used.

You and I had a fair reputation for being fairly controversial at one point. My sense of it was that when people talked about "that Episcopal priest in Philadelphia" they talked about an Episcopal priest. They thought you were kooky, but they didn't doubt you were an Episcopal priest. You came through as a religious person, a nut maybe, but religious. The same thing was true with Dan Berrigan. If, as a result of the Hartford appeal, people will look at us as religious, as Christians, maybe we'll be able to talk to some of these fundamentalists now. Because I signed the Hart-

ford thing, several of them are saying, "Gee, Coffin really believes in the transcendent the same way you do. Now I want to know if you believe in "letting justice roll down like waters!"

David Gracie: urban missionary, Diocese of Pennsylvania.

## WOMEN

### For Canonical Change

The National Coalition for Women's Ordination to the Priesthood and Episcopacy met in May in St. Louis, and adopted a proposal to add a section to Title III, Canon 9 to state explicitly that the canons for the admission of postulants and candidates for the ordination to the orders of priests and deacons and the consecration of bishops be applicable equally to men and women.

The coalition adopted a budget of \$80,000. The next meeting will be in Houston in October.

### A Step Toward the Papacy

According to the National Catholic Reporter, Pope Paul's statement that women did not receive the call to the ordained ministries has aroused mixed reactions from Roman Catholic women's groups in this country.

*The House of Delegates of the National Assembly of Women Religious passed a resolution urging the prompt restoration of the diaconate for women in the Roman Catholic Church.*

*Ms. Frances McGillicuddy, press officer of the U.S. section of St. Joan's International Alliance has been quoted as saying, "I doubt that the Holy Father's address was an 'ex cathedra' Pronouncement".*

*Leaders of a conference in Detroit billed as "Women in Future Priesthood Now — A Call to Action" stated the following: "The biblical understanding, theological reflection, ecclesiological tradition and social acculturation which supported such thought in the past are no longer relevant. . . ."*

### And That's That!

The Rev. Robert Terwilliger of Trinity Institute said at a recent conference, "If God had intended women to be ordained priests, it wouldn't have taken us 1900 years to find it out."

## Network Reports

### Underused Church Properties

Declining church membership plus increased maintenance costs are creating a crisis of unused and underused church buildings, according to speakers at a two-day conference on The Challenge of Underused Church Properties sponsored by the Cheswick Center of Cambridge, Mass., at Trinity Parish in New York, May 13-14.

The conference provided a forum for a search for alternatives for use of church properties as 150 people from church, commercial and governmental sectors shared their concerns and involvements.

Ezra Earl Jones, director of the research office of the National Division of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, described the underuse of church properties as a national and world problem. "It is not the same across the country, but it is inevitable," Jones said.

The problem varies from denomination to denomination, he said, but it lies primarily with the Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches. "Those that have been here the longest are most established in population areas that are declining. This puts the responsibility on them to find solutions now," he said.

Jones gave some principles for action:

"When a building is no longer used by a congregation it is appropriate and sometimes desirable that it be converted to non-religious use or be demolished.

"The decision to enter into a commercial real estate venture by a church will succeed if the motivation is to extend the ministry of the church. If it is to make money the chances for success are poor.

"There is a tremendous problem when you try to merge two congregations and it should be the last thing considered. Mergers are usually from weakness rather than strength. In five years, the new church will be no larger than the larger of the two that merged."



Jones gave one of the few theological approaches of the conference when he said that just as death of people is a difficult problem, so is the death of a church. "It receives almost no theological attention," he said. "It is critical that we have a theology about the closing of a church."

Also at the conference, Beverly Spatt, chairperson of the Landmarks Preservation Commission of New York, speaking for the city government of New York, outlined four problems facing the church:

1) Social: people moving so much that churches cannot sustain themselves. 2) Ideological: churches are not the central force they once were. 3) Economic: endowments are insufficient. Property might be too valuable for non-productive economic use.

The Cheswick Center is making an extended study of the use and mis-use of church properties. They are funded in this study by the National Endowment for the Arts. A preliminary report of its findings, including the New York conference, may be obtained by writing Henry W. Sherrill, The Cheswick Center, 17 Dunster Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.—*William B. Gray*

### **Cleveland Church: Women Priests Now**

On May 5 the Vestry of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Cleveland, passed the following motion by unanimous vote:

Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Cleveland, supports women's ordination to the priesthood and the episcopacy, and secondly we believe the ordination of the 11 women in Philadelphia to be valid and extend a welcome to any of the 11 to celebrate at Emmanuel Episcopal Church.

The action of Rector Dalton D. Downs and the Emmanuel Parish Vestry was conveyed to John H. Burt, bishop of Ohio, and Presiding Bishop John M. Allin.

### **Church and Society Meets Pittsburgh Gothic**

In the midst of Pittsburgh stands Calvary Episcopal Church, a massive pseudo-medieval structure which, like the industrial city it appears to guard, proclaims stability to the universe. In this protected environment the Province III Church and Society Network gathered 30 people for a Memorial Day weekend conference.

From the dioceses of Erie, Bethlehem, Pittsburgh, Virginia and West Virginia came a group of men and women who might have been cast in a play titled "The 1960s Anti-War Extravaganza Revisited." For despite hours of traveling time, wrinkled clothing, and intense heat which wilted even the most effervescent spirits, the participants obviously were the civil rights and anti-war movement. Sartorially some were suburban chic in colorful Bermuda shorts. Others, the urban sophisticates, wore a different style of conservative, but informal, garb. And from the hills of Appalachia, came the denim crowd, the "heavies" who by presence alone demanded respect and attention.

Late on Sunday afternoon, Hugh White called the group together and began introductions.

Present were dissatisfied men and women from suburban churches, frustrated by the alienation of their own lives. From the cities came the representatives of those who see the slow dissolution of social relationships and the failure of the Church to try even to avert the slow spiral downward. The unofficial representatives of the rural poor spoke about the need for organizing to prevent such evils as strip mining.

Introductions were followed by a brief discussion of the purpose of Church and Society by Robert DeWitt. Perhaps the social mission of the Church is being neglected, DeWitt said, as the result of the episodic nature of our individual actions. DeWitt challenged the networkers to find a common ground for action and an analysis of common problems.

After a brief dinner, the diocesan networks reported in. What were the issues in their areas? It was clear that unemployment, strip mining, education and the future of the nuclear family were uppermost in the minds of those present. All agreed the issue of the ordination of women was urgent. Frank Gose, against whom charges are expected for allowing one of the 11 women to celebrate in his parish, reported on his possible trial in the Diocese of Bethlehem.

The discussion moved past its allotted time frame when James Lewis, a West Virginia priest embroiled in the textbook controversy, raised the possibility that our society could slip into fascism. His analysis and caveat were clear: the same institutions which were economically exploiting him were exploiting those who regarded obscenity as only a series of four letter words. Indeed, obscenity, he said, was really unemployment, sexism and exploitation. Obscenity, it was agreed, was



the Church witnessing that exploitation and aiding it by seeking only to be a "catalyst" or "enabler."

The Pittsburgh contingent reported to the group on the election of a delegation to the General Convention favoring the ordination of women. The "McGovern phenomenon" within the Diocese of Pittsburgh and the organizational work of many network people had made a victory possible.

Through the entire meeting a nagging issue remained: Where was the evangelistic passion of those who saw the Church as social mission? Where was the self-identity of the progressives in the Church? If that self-identity had been robbed, who took it? If it had been mortgaged, who was holding the bank note?

The Memorial Day session was a memorable one. DeWitt, reporting on the Wendt and Beebe trials, noted that the failure of the Church to deal with the presence of the 11 priests ordained in Philadelphia was throwing the Church into confusion internally and scandal externally. Both CBS and NBC, he pointed out, covered the Wendt trial on the same night they covered the American exit from Vietnam.

Frank Gose spoke of the eucharistic celebration with one of the women priests in Reading Pa. It was clear that Frank thought of himself as a leader, not a corporate manager, not a "professional" cleric. Unlike the corporate manager, anguishing over falling of production, and worrying about marketing, Frank and his parish had decided that a different leadership style was what the Holy Spirit had called them to.

Later in the morning Hugh White began a discussion of power structure analysis. Relying heavily on Rosemary Reuther for theology, and C. Wright Mills' social analysis, White suggested that the forces for liberation were in the professional and working classes. His analysis of the oppressed as the source of liberation led the conference back into its Friday night debate. Could we form a common understanding of social mission by an analysis of power relationships in the society, if the Church continues to serve as chaplain to an exploitative social order?

The participants of the conference then moved into small groups. They later reported that the network should work toward alliances with those who are not necessarily Episcopalians, but are from the grass roots, and are anti-imperialist in their international outlook. A group working on a viewpoint came up with eight ideological statements, but agreed on the need to continue their work. Another group suggested the immediate creation of committees of correspondence among the local networks to work out a strategy leading to the approval of women's ordination at the Minnesota Convention.

In the waning hours of Monday afternoon the suburban chic, the urban sophisticate, and the denim heavies parted company in the echo of their common recitation of the Lord's Prayer. The service, however, was not ending; we had merely begun the Introit.—*Richard Gressle, assistant minister, Calvary Church, Pittsburgh*

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