

# THE WITNESS

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HISPANIC COMMISSION

Church & City:

## **Random Growth, Random Flight**

Arthur E. Walmsley



## **Convention Perspectives**

Robert L. DeWitt   Roy Larson



# Letters to the Editor

*The Witness* reserves the right to condense all letters

## Misunderstood Carter

William R. Coats' analysis of Jimmy Carter's campaign (*THE WITNESS*, August) reflects a basic misunderstanding both of the Carter campaign and of the historical and political tradition out of which it grows.

Carter does not reflect "nostalgia for pioneer America," by which Coats means a society of antisocial freeholders armed with squirrel rifles. In fact, he is a political product of the Deep South and its populist tradition. Indeed, Coats' assertion that Carter "break(s) people off from their social setting", so that they are denuded of their membership in "social movements" to stand before him "politically and socially naked" is belied by Carter's own philosophical and hereditary connection to the Populist movement. Carter's maternal grandfather was a key political lieutenant of Georgia Populist leader Tom Watson, who in the late 19th century forged a social movement complete with party structure and party press — a deeply flawed and ultimately doomed movement, but a social movement nonetheless.

Carter's own campaign gives testimony that as a Southerner the candidate has a deep understanding of the most significant social movement of the postwar era — the Civil Rights movement. This movement had Southern origins, a Southern base, and Southern leadership. Far from negating the importance of social movements, Carter has been honest enough to point out that he owes his existence as a national politician to the Civil Rights movement and its liberating effect on black and white Southerners.

Lastly, readers should recognize Coats' glib prediction that Carter will "do what all evangelicals do when pushed...move to the right" for what it is: an unfounded guess based largely on religious prejudice.

The rise of Carter is a far more complex — and encouraging — phenomenon than Coats suggests. It needs dispassionate analysis. But it should be examined in light of the facts and historical realities.

**Garrett Epps**  
Richmond, Virginia

## May We Reprint?

May we have permission to reprint in *The Cincinnati Post* on our op-ed page — with whatever credit you designate — William R. Coats' piece on Carter's politics from *THE WITNESS*?

Bishop John Krumm (on whose diocesan communications committee I serve) would confirm that our work is careful, our range wide. From Harcourt Brace to various professional journals, we have virtually standing permission to reprint from provocative sources of the day.

**David B. Bowes**  
Cincinnati, Ohio

*(We are pleased that The Cincinnati Post reprinted the Coats article on August 26. — Ed.)*

## Not Being Snobbish

The article by William R. Coats states "Jimmy Carter is an evangelical Protestant and a politician. This combination bothers some people. Starched Episcopalians are disturbed because they are snobs."

It is my deep conviction that Episcopalians have been taught and firmly believe that God is the One who can decide "who is to be saved". No Billy Graham, Jimmy Carter, Jehovah's Witness or any other human being or group of human beings is really up to this decision. This is not being snobbish — it is simply the fact of the matter.

**Jane B. Greaves**  
Williamsport, Pa.

## Cover Powerful

The August, 1976 issue of *THE WITNESS* carried one of the most powerful statements I have seen with regard to the Church vs. Christianity. I refer to the woodcut by Robert Hodgell. I would very much like to purchase a print of this incisive work.

**Edward J. Getlein**  
Woodbridge, Conn.

Letters continued on page 15

### CREDITS

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# THE WITNESS

Robert L. DeWitt, Editor; Mary Lou Suhor, Managing Editor; E. Lawrence Carter, Robert Eckersley, Antoinette Swanger, Lisa K. Whelan, Hugh C. White Jr. Editorial and Business Office: P.O. Box 359, Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002. Telephone (215) 643-7067. Subscription rates; \$9.00 per year; \$1.00 per copy. *The Witness* is published monthly by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Board of Directors: Bishops Morris Arnold, Robert DeWitt, Lloyd Gressle, John Hines, John Krumm, Brooke Mosley and Dr. Joseph Fletcher. Copyright 1976 by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Printed in U.S.A.

## A Convention With 'Class'

Robert L. DeWitt

"We have created our institutions, and by God's grace we can transform them — they are missionary areas."

That statement was made by Henry Atkins of Washington, D.C., one of the panelists at the Church and Society forum on "Racism" at the recent General Convention. Transforming institutions is a large order for the church. True, the church has an instinct for justice, ambiguous though its gropings for justice may be. It has a tendency toward the appropriate, though its realization of what is appropriate is always lagging.

The action taken at the recent Convention which enabled the ordination of women is an illustration. The shock-waves of that action have gone out and the only thing clear is that it will have an impact for a long time to come both inside the Episcopal Church and, more importantly, beyond it. The simple question of justice implicit in the issue has now been clearly addressed, after a too-long and painful period of confusion and evasion of the issue.

The Prayer Book is another illustration. Regardless of the eventual outcome of the arduous process of Prayer Book revision, an overwhelming majority of the people voting at Convention made it clear that they wanted the words and modes of their worship to be more nearly attuned to their contemporary life experience.

Yes, we have created our institutions, and we can transform them. That has been demonstrated. It is good that the church seeks to set its own house in

order. But the weightier matters are in the world, where the wrongs to be righted are rooted in its man-made systems — economic, political, and ecclesiastical. And the church will shed little light in this world if it does not take account of this fact — as well as acknowledge the class bias of the Episcopal Church as it seeks to impact those systems.

The Minneapolis Convention was illustrative of the problem. The arrangements for housing, eating, meeting, and the length of the Convention (who can take off that much time?) — were on a typical level of luxury which inevitably and intentionally (though unconsciously) produced a group of deputies the vast majority of whom were upper middle class. Such an assemblage is virtually incapable of understanding or identifying with those suffering under the systems of this world who are the central concern of the gospel.

True, the Episcopal Church is not actually as upper middle class as would seem evident at such a Convention. With a more accurately representative group it would better understand and grasp its mission.

But at its representative best the church still needs something further. For the sake of its own mission it needs contact with other groups who often have no interest in that mission, but whose involvements and commitments are consistent with that mission. The search for social justice requires commitment, and the church has much to learn about commitment to social justice. In that regard, our Appalachian, Black, Native American and Latin American neighbors have much to teach us.



## Church and City:

# Random Growth, Random Flight

by Arthur E. Walmsley

The purpose of this year's Church and City Conference was threefold: to reflect on the history of the Episcopal Church in urban areas, in particular the developments of the last two decades; to look at several contemporary "models" of urban ministry, and to consider the possible roles which the Conference may assume to strengthen the work of the Episcopal Church in the urban centers of the nation. Let us reflect on our church's urban history.

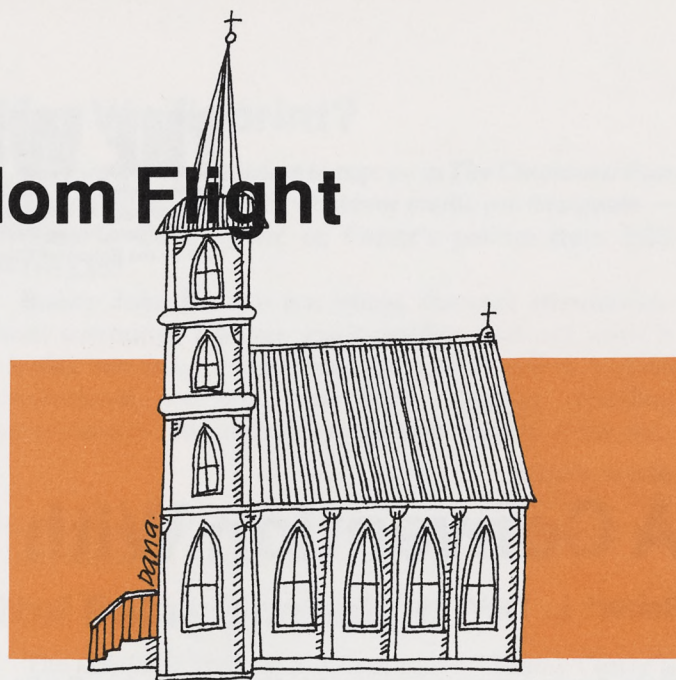
**Chapter 1 of a book on this subject might be entitled "Random Growth," and its counterpoint, "Random Flight."** The early strategy of the Anglican Church in America was to have a church within walking distance of its members in the city; within riding distance in the country. As the cities of the continent began to grow in the 19th Century, the legacy of this haphazard growth was a constantly shifting checkerboard of churches which leapfrogged over each other as housing patterns changed and residential neighborhoods pushed further away from the commercial centers of the cities.

When I began a curacy in the early 1950s in St. Louis, it was in a parish located about four miles from the Mississippi River, which marked the eastern edge of downtown St. Louis. On the axis between our building and the river there were six Episcopal parish buildings. Six years later, there was only one, the Cathedral downtown. I once made a haphazard exploration of the history of parish locations in the city, and turned up no less than 18 additional and by then abandoned sites on that four mile axis. My own parish, Trinity, was then in its fifth building.

Which is to say that the missionary strategy of the church was no strategy at all; rather a quixotic, thoroughly congregational process of locating churches in the midst of "our kind" of people — however defined — and abandoning buildings and neighborhoods in the face of successive waves of ethnic migration or commercial change.

Parishes tended, too, to be stratified and exclusive, even apart from churchmanship considerations. Fall River,

**Arthur E. Walmsley**, rector of St. Paul's Church, New Haven, was for 13 years involved in the church's ministry in public affairs at the national or state level. He served as treasurer of the Boston Industrial Mission for three years.



Mass., which was my mother's birthplace shortly after the turn of the century, managed at that time in history to support six Episcopal churches; a principal distinction among them was the county of origin in England of their members, primarily migrating mill workers. A Yorkshireman would find himself as unwelcome in a neighboring parish made up of Englishmen from another county as would a Pole in a French-Canadian ethnic Roman Catholic parish.

**To some extent Chapter 2 would parallel Chapter 1. It might be called "The Emergence of a Social Consciousness in the American Church."** During the century which begins in the 1830s or '40s, there began to develop a sense of responsibility towards the city, and especially to the poor. This movement had three dimensions.

One was the creation of a matrix of social service agencies. The first Episcopal City Missionary Society was organized in New York in 1864 to care for the neglected people of the city. The second followed in Philadelphia in 1872. At one of its high points, the New York Society served some 350,000 persons in 1920. And at their peak of organization, there were 28 functioning city mission societies under the aegis of the Episcopal Church, and perhaps 350 social service agencies of all sorts working in the cities.

A second development of the 19th century was the emergence of the Social Gospel. The publication in 1907 of Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis* is a critical date in the history of the peculiarly American version of Protestant social thought. But there was already, for American Episcopalians, a tradition of Christian social



thinking filtering across from England in the writing and organizing work of the Christian socialists: Charles Kingsley and Frederick Denison Maurice, and in the second generation, Scott Holland, Stewart Headlam, Bishop Charles Gore, and the founders of Fabian socialism. Patterned on British roots, the Church Association for the Advancement of the Interest of Labor was founded in 1887 (only a year after the organization of the American Federation of Labor). It later spawned the Church Socialist League, the Church League for Industrial Democracy, and the Episcopal League for Social Action.

A third development in the emerging social consciousness of the Church might be termed the *socially involved parish*. One thread of this development goes back to the expulsion of the supporters of the Tractarian Movement in England from the universities and socially-desirable parishes, and the development of a unique style of Anglo-Catholic inner-city ministry.

I must remind you of one more fact of our history as a church. Prior to 1922, there existed no national entity within the Episcopal Church other than the General Convention. That year marked the creation out of a mishmash of semi-autonomous missionary and other agencies of the National (now Executive) Council, responsible by charter to unify the "missionary, educational, and social work" of the Church.

It was, however, 1952 before the General Convention authorized any body or staff person to consider the needs and opportunities of the church in the city, and to conduct related research and experimentation. Significantly, although the well-financed Division of Town and Country Work was integral to the Home Department and its responsibility for missionary expansion and churchly ministries on a geographical basis, the Division of Urban Industrial Church Work was lodged in the Social Relations Department.

That is perhaps to get ahead of the story, but it underlines a fundamental point which continues to dominate any discussion in official structures concerning ministry in the city: social consciousness and concern for the neighbor who is not an Episcopalian are here to stay; but large segments of the Church continue to see the culture of the city as an alien place, and the ministry to the poor and alienated as secondary to the "real work" of the Episcopal Church.

Let me briefly sketch four more chapters in this history.

**Chapter 3 we might call "Revolution in a City Parish."** Abbe Michonneau's book of that title was published in 1949. It illustrated the ferment in Europe and this country

which insisted there must be a reconstruction of institutions following the great depression and the war. I remember the excitement of visiting Grace Church, van Vorst, for the first time, and working at St. John's, Roxbury, during my seminary days; of hearing from my seminary friend, Scott Paradise, about his work with Ted Wickham at the Sheffield Industrial Mission; of crossing the narrow strand of water to a rebuilding abbey church at Iona; and, a few years later, of seeing the theological writings of Hendrick Kraemer on the laity being fleshed out by Fran Ayres at the Parishfield Community.

I remember going with Arthur Lichtenberger, he a new coadjutor in Missouri and I a new deacon, to an urban conference in the fall of 1951 in Chicago, and next year meeting Paul Musselman, who was the head of the Urban Industrial Division. But I can also remember the remark of Dr. Joseph Nicholson, the acerbic rector of All Saints, St. Louis, on our first meeting: "*Just remember, my enthusiastic white friend, you can always go home to the suburbs.*"

The late '40s and '50s were a time of ferment and experimentation. They were also the time when the national bureaucracies of the mainstream churches began to expand rapidly.

**The stage was set for Chapter 4, "The Urban Coup d'Etat." Or, by its mythic city's name, "Metabagdad."** The Miami Convention in 1958 voted to expand the work of the Division of Urban Industrial Church Work. Detroit was a natural setting for the next Convention. The Detroit Industrial Mission organized bus tours to industrial sites. And the urban lobby, sparked in large measure by the then leaders of the Church and City Conference, lobbied through a million dollar urban program.

It was to be lodged in the Home Department under Daniel Corrigan, though its existence as a "Joint Urban Program" gave it access to every other department of the Council. Its charge was modest: to create a missionary strategy for a church which did not have one, and whose policy dictated against the creation of one:

*The staffing, evolving, evaluating, and promoting the execution of a realistic, effective program of our Church, on the national level, which is primarily designed:*

*(a) to initiate, promote, and correlate research indicating the reaction of the rapidly changing work forces and living patterns of our industrial society to the Episcopal Church working through the inner city church;*



*(b) to develop leadership and strategy by which the inner city church may more precisely relate its opportunity for Christian witness to these changing forces and patterns;*

*(c) to train skilled field workers, both clerical and lay, in resolving the problems of the inner-city church in an industrialized society;*

*(d) to stimulate vocations for work in this field;*

*(e) to urge upon our dioceses and missionary districts the development of diocesan, district, and parish programs to meet and resolve this opportunity at those levels.*

The program lasted six years, under the direction of James Morton and G. H. (Jack) Woodard. To recall some of its accomplishments: the Metabagdad simulation training exercise, an effort to develop pan-parochial planning processes in urban centers; the funding of action training centers, such as the Chicago Urban Training Center (to gauge the scale of this involvement, it might be noted that in the 1968-70 triennium, \$499,946 of national Episcopal Church money was funneled to 13 centers); the support of a network of industrial missions, which had emerged out of the pioneer efforts of Hugh White and Scott Paradise in Detroit; the quarterly publication of "Church in Metropolis," complete with original serigraphs by Sister Corita; and the Pilot Diocese program, aimed at structural change and carefully supervised experimentation in a mix of dioceses.

These developments in the Episcopal Church were matched by a comparable growth in budget resources and staff bureaucracies in the national agencies of other denominations, and by a range of ad hoc new ecumenical coalitions, such as the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) and the Joint Strategy and Action Committee (JSAC) designed somewhat explicitly to bypass the ponderous machinery of traditional ecumenical organizations.

On the World Council of Churches level, the major study development of the decade was a complex examination on "the missionary structure of the local church," which, though it did not explicitly reject the parish church as an arena of mission, devoted major attention to experimental, non-parish ministries. Secular theology, pop liturgy, and anti-establishment rhetoric were in the ascendancy. The heady days of Northern white liberal involvement in the Southern civil rights movement found a counterpart in political action in Washington during days of the New Frontier and War on Poverty in Washington.

Then came Chapter 5, "Black Power." Black readers

probably have noted that no mention has been made until this point of the presence of black congregations of the Episcopal Church in urban areas. The fact is that no matter how active these congregations were, the urban challenge and urban strategy for the Episcopal Church were defined in terms of the survival and transition of the white congregation, and only minimal funds were deployed for the black Episcopal Church, urban or rural.

The statistical reality of American urban change in the 50 year period between 1910 and 1960 was a complete reversal of the housing pattern of American blacks, from 73% rural to an equivalent percent urbanized.

Yet the image of the urban challenge for the Episcopal Church which preoccupies us is that of the beleaguered neighborhood congregation faced with a dwindling Caucasian congregation and soaring costs, or the downtown church with solid resources forced to cut back on expensive programs in the face of a depressed securities market. In his recent book, *Survival and Mission for the City Church*, Gaylord Noyce, associate director of the Berkeley Center at Yale, offers creative suggestions to downtown churches in their efforts to define role models in the new urban mix.

But the book seems to neglect altogether the need for those churches to seek out changed patterns of relationships to and redeployment of resources with and on behalf of the black church, Episcopal and otherwise.

That issue surfaced in the Episcopal Church during and following the Seattle Convention of 1967. Initially it found expression in the General Convention Special Program. Bishop Hines in part defined the charter of the new program in one principle, that Episcopalians should try to discover

*...how the resources of this Church, resources human and financial, might intelligently and humbly be enlisted in the service of the people of the cities, and by what criteria this Church might enter into partnership with the indigenous community groups in impoverished slum areas which have been organized by the residents themselves, are run by them, and are seeking to alleviate the conditions which are destroying them.*

That the program essentially bypassed Episcopal congregations in the center city did not go long unchallenged. The recently organized and increasingly outspoken Union of Black Clergy and Laity (now the Union of Black Episcopalians) demanded and received a grant for its own organizational development, and in the six years of its existence, GCSP increasingly channeled funds into



projects sponsored by Black, Hispanic, and Indian Episcopal congregations and agencies.

With the dismantling of the GCSP in 1973, and the reorganization of staff and program at the national church level, it is not at all clear whether the Episcopal Church, nationally and in the dioceses, is even now prepared to take seriously black and other ethnic parishes in the city as essential parts of its urban strategy. One thing is clear, however; the creation of a "black desk" at the Executive Council, the Absalom Jones Institute within the Atlanta University theological complex, and the emergence of strong ecumenical and Episcopal black clergy groups guarantee that there will be no revival of an "urban strategy" which concerns itself only for the beleaguered white congregation in the city.

It is a denial of our history as a church to pretend that the Episcopal Church is not, in the main, a white middle class institution, and it is damaging and psychologically self-defeating to pretend that we are anything else. But it is sociologically and morally as detached from reality to fail to insure that our resources are deployed in such a way as to support and encourage the vital new churches — Black and Hispanic — which are emerging in the cities. All of which leads to the tragic implications of the last chapter.

**Chapter 6 might variously be called, "The Myth of the Grass Roots," or "The Lure of Decentralization," or, somewhat cynically, "The Sellout of Urban Mission."** In the last decade, most urban dioceses have undertaken a process of reorganization which locates planning and budgeting processes in geographical clusters variously called deaneries, or districts, or inter-parish councils. Central diocesan staff for urban work, mission strategy, and social action have been phased out; the functional distance between center cities and suburban and rural

areas of dioceses has been increased.

Although there is a modest resource program for rural and non-metropolitan churches titled "New Directions" in operation under the direction of Boone Porter at Roanridge, there is nothing comparable at the national level, either under "815" auspices or organized on an ad hoc basis among urban dioceses, to provide dioceses, urban deaneries, or clusters of urban parishes with consultation and advice on their strategies for the future.

Institutionally, it would appear the Episcopal Church is at the approximate same spot as it was prior to 1952 with respect to the development of strategy and resources for the church in the city.

But that statement is true in only a partial sense. We have no more organized resources for facing the city than we had 20 years ago. But the plight of the cities is greater, and the erosion of our traditional base proceeds at a rapid pace. It is ironic that the most recent merger in New York City yokes three of that city's most historic parishes: The Church of the Holy Communion, associated with the name of William Augustus Muhlenberg and the formation of religious orders, the revival of liturgical worship, and the seeds of ecumenism; St. George's Church, the seat of Rainsford's pioneer work in institutional parish ministry; and Calvary, the pulpit long associated with the charisma of Sam Shoemaker.

In a word, time is running out for the Episcopal Church in the city. We have no strategy of consolidation and redeployment of resources for our traditional white settings; and no serious missionary strategy for strengthening existing black congregations and looking ahead to the future.

It isn't the task of this article to propose strategies, but let me close with a statement of three needs which are glaringly apparent from this brief survey:

1) A canon, preferably national and therefore binding on dioceses, that permits the Diocesan bishop, under carefully defined circumstances, to move in on redundant or defunct parishes which fail to serve their communities, and at a stage early enough that resources can be productively used within the same community or city.

2) A consulting or idea/exchange function which, though it could not pretend to undertake the ambitious urban programs of the '60s, permits parishes, clusters, deaneries, and dioceses to learn from each other.

3) A program for training and redeploying full-time, part-time, and non-stipendiary clergy, on something of the same model of the "New Directions" project, and making full use of such black-oriented resources as the Absalom Jones Institute.





# Court vs. Chavis

## Subtle Violence

by Robert Maurer

Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., has been on a "spiritual fast and political hunger strike" since April 30. He is engaged in one of the oldest Christian tactics against an unjust system. There are many who do not want him to succeed. A great deal is at stake.

Chavis is incarcerated in Central Prison Hospital in Raleigh N.C. An hour to the northeast by car stands Oxford, his home town. He regularly attended an Episcopal Church there. He may not have wanted to go every Sunday, but he was certainly expected to attend: Ben Chavis, Sr. was lay reader and senior warden of that church until his death. Though not officially ordained to do so, Ben's father served often as priest because the church was frequently without clergy. This was Ben's first experience with the proposition that the requirements of the Spirit are paramount to the strictures of the Law.

The *Wilmington 10*, of which Chavis is the leading member, are in prisons throughout North Carolina because the United States Supreme Court last Jan. 19 refused to hear an appeal to review their convictions on two counts of an indictment resulting from a racial shoot-out in Wilmington more than five years ago. They surrendered themselves on Feb. 2 to begin serving terms averaging 26 years.

Three days before their peaceful surrender, however, defense lawyers filed a writ of habeas corpus because bond had been denied *The Ten* by Judge Logan D. Howell of the federal district court. Although by law such a writ must be heard within 40 days of filing (and its hearing would automatically mean the defendants were eligible for release on bond), the judge as of Labor Day had yet to assign the case a date on his court calendar. Eight black former high school students, a white woman social worker and Chavis languish in jail.

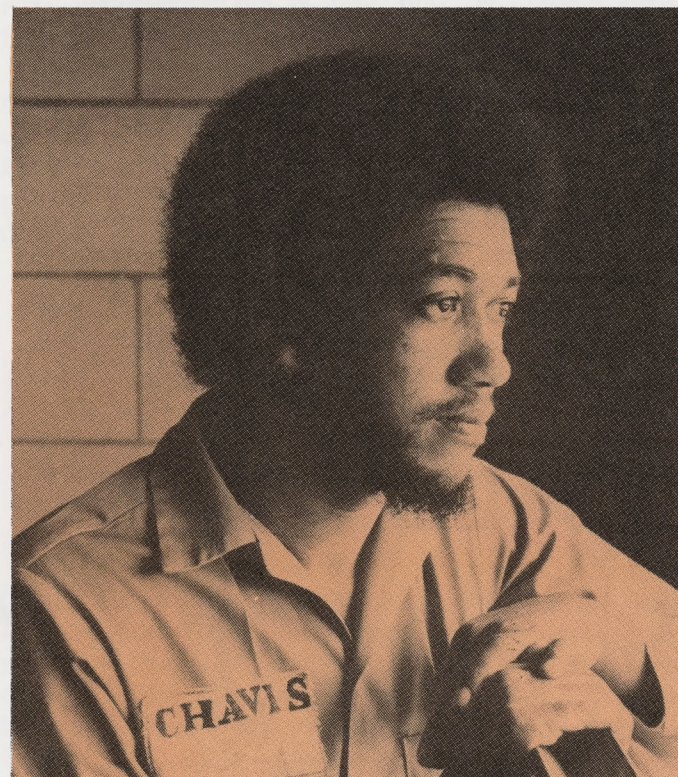
In moral terms, the case is a classic confrontation between the persuasive advantages of a Christian conscience and the subtly coercive weapons of judicial and other governmental procedures. And yet, behind this moral



dimension lies a political clash of two opposing ambitions for the governance of North Carolina.

To put it simply, one ambition would divide black and white to allow the continuation of conservative rule in the Tar Heel state. The other would unite black and white to install liberal rule. That same clash of ambitions caused the 1898 Massacre in Wilmington, N.C. Then the clash of conservative whites and liberal blacks meant death for at least 30 blacks. The Massacre terminated the decisive political gains made by black officeholders during Reconstruction. In 1898 the question of who would govern the eastern portion of North Carolina (and, by example, the entire state) was decided by outright slaughter. Today, the means of violence are more subtle, lodged as they are in the criminal justice system. But the stakes are the same.

Ben Chavis was invited to Wilmington in February, 1971 to organize black high school students — in part to avoid




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Robert Maurer is a free-lance writer living in New York City.



bloodshed. At the time Chavis was field staff for the United Church of Christ N.C.-Va. Commission for Racial Justice (he is currently director of CRJ's Washington office). He accomplished the task he was asked to do. Chavis organized angry students, whose demands for such things as a black studies program had been officially rejected, to protest through non-violent marches. But the white Wilmington community remained disorganized. White vigilantes and their supporters, (many of whom were members of the Rights of White People who considered the Klan outmoded and milk toast), started a pitched battle which the police and the mayor could not, and would not, stop.

The pattern which the *Wilmington 10* episode presents is an increasingly familiar one. The system of repression initially requires two sticks to ignite the necessary flame. The first stick is "them," the "outside agitator" group. The second, and equally important, is "us," a group of hostile people opposed to "them."

The resulting violent conflict is then managed so that loss of life and property damage does not offend society's already high tolerance for both. But also managed so that there is enough loss of life and/or property damage to warrant an official investigation. (I do not doubt such a proposition will annoy some people, but in Wilmington the mayor doggedly refused to call out the National Guard through three days of armed conflict, and did so, *not* after a black youth was killed, but after a white adult was killed. Chavis was subsequently indicted for conspiracy to murder this white man.)

After the two sticks have ignited the flame, a third group steps in: the so-called defenders of law and order. In the guise of re-establishing stability in the afflicted area, they eventually indict the defenders of non-violence.

What is notable in the pattern of sophisticated repression is an organic link between the group called "us" and the so-called defenders of law and order. On the surface, the two groups appear vastly different in background, education, public utterances. White vigilantes carrying shotguns in their pick-up trucks do not seem to resemble lawyers in their vested suits or judges in their robes. And yet, those who take the law into their hands (and their supporters) and those who lay their hands on a Bible swearing to uphold the law — at least in North Carolina — are blood relatives in need of each other's services to repress black aspirations.

The prosecutors and judges need the majority of the white vote on election day. Every other day white voters (not all of them, of course) need to feel the security which comes with knowing that "their kind" is in office. To be specific, the *Wilmington 10* case has provided, among

## The Shoot-Out

In December 1970, black high school students in Wilmington requested, among other things, permission to celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday the following month...

The students needed a place to meet, but many church and other doors were shut in their faces. Finally, Gregory Congregational Church provided the meeting space. Many white people were set on closing that door, too. Several bomb threats were made; the minister asked the mayor for police protection but received no response.

On February 5 whites opened fire on the church and its occupants. One white resident, who strongly believed that the shoot-out was the opening battle in black strategy to overthrow the US Government, observed that the chief of police had his hands full keeping his own men from rushing the church and shooting the defenders. The students inside, aided by black Viet Nam veterans, shot back for three days and nights. One black youth and one white adult were killed; stores in the neighborhood were burned down. Early on the fourth morning, the National Guard was ordered to surround the church. When the Guard's major general called out for those inside to surrender, no one answered. The occupants had left the night before.

Fourteen months later, the *Wilmington 11* (one case was dropped later) were indicted on a series of charges including both a conspiracy to burn and the actual burning of the stores in the neighborhood, and conspiracy to assault and actual assault of emergency personnel who tried to put the fires out. For the death of the white adult, Ben Chavis and Marvin Patrick, a student, were charged with conspiracy to murder. The policemen who shot the black youth were exonerated from all charges, and the chief declared the killing "justifiable homicide." Seven whites were charged with being armed to terrorize people and received light suspended sentences.

"The Ben Chavis Case"  
*Christianity and Crisis*, 5/24/76

other things — an opportunity for career development: The local judge who heard the case was appointed by the governor to the state appeals court; and the local prosecutor was elevated by former President Nixon to the post of assistant U.S. Attorney. The successful senatorial campaign of the North Carolina attorney general benefited from his sending a special prosecutor to the original trial.



In summary, then, the flame which is first ignited by "them" and "us" is a source of political energy for putting into office officials who, in turn, consolidate a repressive criminal justice system.

That system has protected North Carolinians very well from the *Wilmington 10*. It put them in jail for four months following their indictment (bail had been set at an exorbitant \$400,000); it refused to review their appeal in the state Court of Appeals, and the system has held them in jail again, without bail, for nine months thus far. That system also placed Chavis at first in the McCain Prison Hospital, which held only tubercular and mentally deranged inmates. His physical safety, like that of the others, was (and still is) in jeopardy.

Why Ben Chavis? Why are North Carolina officials after him? Have they seen in him a potential threat to their political system of privilege? After all, his family roots go deeper into North Carolina soil than many of their own. His family name, Chavis, is Cherokee, and his paternal family origins date back to the time of interminglings between African slaves and eastern shore Indians. His great-great-grandfather, Rev. John Chavis, was the first black Presbyterian minister in America.

He earned his Ph.D. from Princeton, and then founded an academy in which he taught Greek and Latin to white Congressmen from North Carolina. In fact, from his academy came the beginnings of the University of North Carolina, from which Ben graduated in 1970. The Chavis family has been distinguished throughout the years and throughout the state in the fields of education, child welfare, and community service. The honor roll is long, including an uncle who managed the construction of some of Raleigh's public buildings and an aunt who was the first woman to graduate from Shaw University. Chavis' mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Chavis, recently retired after 40 years as a school teacher.

Like the King family in Georgia, the Chavis family in North Carolina could not help but be a potential threat to conservative governance if it produced a talented, aggressive, articulate child who interpreted "community service" differently from his forebears.

Chavis has described his protest in prison as a "spiritual fast and political hunger strike." The coupling of the spiritual and political is vital. The criminal justice system, or any coercive system for that matter, will not be fundamentally replaced until the two realms of the spiritual (justice) and political (governance) find expression through the *same* system. Is this not the unique task of the church, to help bring these two realms together?

# The People's Choice?

by Lynda Ann Ewen

The election hoopla has ended. *Time* magazine, Walter Cronkite, and the nation's editorial writers went to great lengths to describe the presidential candidates — their views, their personalities, their pasts, and their potential futures. The whole process, of course, was predicated upon the assumption that the average voter had a choice.

Choice in a presidential election is deemed essential for democracy in this country. But was there a choice — an alternative that would make a real difference in the lives of the vast majority of working people, the youth and the elderly, the unemployed and the poverty stricken?

During the period between the Democratic and Republican nominating conventions, I glimpsed two aspects of the American reality which drove home to me the fact that there were no real options. I live in Kanawha County, West Virginia, which encompasses District 17 of the United Mine Workers of America. During July and August I watched and came to understand a mass strike. Over 100,000 working miners who are tough, disciplined, hard-working and typically have large families went on an "unauthorized work stoppage". They demanded that the courts cease issuing injunctions to break strikes and that the Federal judges be investigated for possible conflicts of interest.

The strike began at a mine not far from my home, but rapidly spread throughout the entire Eastern coal region and even reached Colorado. The men had just come back from vacations and wallets were empty. (There is no "strike pay" in the UMWA.) But as one miner's mother put it to me "Those judges are trying to break the union. I'd never have my son work in a non-union mine. Better he lose his car than his union".

At the height of the strike I went to Detroit to visit family for a week. While there I visited a friend who lived near a

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house we had rented three years earlier. I was astounded by the desolation of the area. What had once been a block of working class single family homes and duplexes was now, literally, urban desert. One-half to two-thirds of the homes had either been razed or stood as empty hulks, gutted by fire. Lawns had overgrown and the street was badly littered.

I stood there several minutes, trying to grapple with the meaning of what I saw. The home across the street had housed, downstairs, an Appalachian White family and, upstairs, a Black family. They used to barbecue chicken together and the aroma was delicious. Now the building was burned out. Two houses down, a house stood boarded, vacant but not yet gutted or razed. An Arab family had lived there, their dark-eyed children joining the multi-national mix of kids that played ball in the street on warm evenings.

I watched Walter Cronkite that night and at least half of his presentation was occupied by the trivial details of the Republican Convention, almost a week away. I was anxious for news as to what was happening with the miners' strike, and still upset at what I had seen in my old neighborhood.

But the mass media never showed a candidate speaking to the issue of the strike. If they had, they *would* have revealed choices. A clear position on the strike would have been a position either in sympathy with the working miners and their interests in decent wages, safety, working conditions, and their union given equal consideration before the courts, *or* in sympathy with the coal companies' position that "Production is the name of the game" (quote taken from a statement made by one of the judges) and that "damages" to profits far outweigh the human factors.

Neither was there a discussion of the urban crisis. Only at the time of urban rebellion or local elections are the tragedies of the city national "news". The candidates weren't speaking about my old neighborhood either. Again, that *would* have revealed choices. A clear position on the urban crisis would have been one that either argued for strict enforcement of housing codes on slum landlords, the massive reallocation of federal funds from a bloated military budget to subsidization of public housing, medical services, education and recreation; *or* a position that somehow the city's problems would solve themselves under the "given" system.

Were this a democracy, and were there a choice, wouldn't one candidate have argued the pro-status quo, pro-business position, and one candidate argued for radical change, a pro-working class position? And since elections are determined by votes, and miners far outnumber coal operators, wouldn't the workers have won?

The fact, of course, is that Carter and Ford both represent the same class interests. Although they may differ on the precise tactics of how to run this country they are in deep and fundamental agreement on the question of in whose interests this country should be run.

This is important, for in order to preserve the facade of democracy, the media tried to make Carter look like a champion of "little people". If one looks at the facts, the view is much different.

During Carter's tenure on the Sumter County School Board, he supported sick pay for white teachers but not for black teachers, and favored raises for white teachers from the surplus sick funds thus generated. He voted against a request by the teachers to come under the social security system. This kind of political behaviour earned him a seat in the Georgia State Senate.

In 1970 Carter ran for Governor of Georgia, receiving major funds from the Coca-Cola Corporation (to the tune of half a million dollars). Coke even provided a jet to fly him to Europe. After his election as governor, Lockheed Corporation paid for his trip to Brazil where he helped them sell airplanes to the Brazilian dictatorship.

In 1970 Carter changed his tune on discrimination. His rhetoric now became "populist" — pro-little people and

## Half Don't Vote

Joseph Kraft reported in his column shortly before elections that about half the eligible electorate — some 65 million persons — would not be going to the polls.

Kraft said a study of the country's non-voters by Washington pollster Peter Hart revealed that more than two-thirds gave as the reason for their non-participation, "Candidates say one thing and then do another."

More than half listed as an important reason, "It doesn't make any difference who is elected because things never seem to work right."

The poll revealed that nearly half of the non-voters were young people, between 18 and 34. And evidence shows that those who start off non-voting continue not to vote.



anti-Wall Street. But his politics were only being honed to the "New South" image he was being prepared to represent. In 1973 David Rockefeller (Chairman of the Board of Chase Manhattan Bank) and Zbigniew Brzezinski (of a prominent Wall Street law firm) invited Carter to join the Trilateral Commission, a group of international businessmen from the United States, Western Europe and Japan. As a member of this Commission, Carter associated with some of the most powerful capitalists in the areas of foreign policy and international economy.

With this brief background it is clearer how a relatively obscure political figure of ten years ago was catapulted into public prominence, and could "sweep" the primaries. Those who ultimately are responsible for this system understood that political legitimacy in the upcoming election demanded a face seemingly untouched by the decadence and corruption which had been exposed.

Did this facade of choice fool the American public? Yes, and no. It "fooled" them inasmuch as a false choice was offered in place of a real choice. That is, no alternative was offered to the non-alternative. There were no national media campaigns to expose Carter's links to Rockefeller, to expose the real reasons for military spending, to identify the true sources of unemployment and poverty. Many

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people believed there was no choice but a bad choice, so they resigned themselves to the "lesser of the two evils".

On the other hand, it did *not* fool the American public. Over half of the Americans eligible to vote do not vote in presidential elections. And the vast majority do not because there is no candidate who represents *them*. Mass media columnists say people are "apathetic", but in reality the non-voters are disillusioned and cynical about the system.

Is there really no choice? Is it really all so hopeless? Those who control our system do not mind if you are critical or cynical, as long as you believe that "no matter how bad it is it's still the best". Critical dissent is allowed, as long as it does not offer an articulate, organized *alternative*.

But it is *not* hopeless. Human beings make creative and independent responses to objective conditions — a capacity labelled "human intelligence". And the working people of this country are strong, disciplined, and intelligent. (One must not confuse misinformation and miseducation with lack of intelligence!) Despite a massive campaign against the union, 100,000 miners stayed out for four weeks and won major gains. Despite gloomy media projections that court-ordered bussing in Detroit would erupt in serious violence, organized working class response to that crisis built a coalition of blacks and whites around the slogan of "Equal and Quality Education for ALL Children" that prevented another "Boston". Despite anti-communism and the lack of rich benefactors, a petition campaign to put a Communist Labor Party candidate on the ballot in Michigan obtained over 30,000 signatures.

Those who perceive the alternative may be those who agree with the principles of socialism and have moved past their cultural indoctrination that communism is evil. Or those who perceive the alternative may never have been exposed to a sympathetic presentation of socialism, yet deep within themselves they somehow believe in the fundamental decency of their fellow human beings and hate a system which exploits, oppresses and wages war for the sake of profit.

But this tremendous reservoir of strength exists — although the system will deny it, villify it, and ruthlessly repress its potential organization. We can rest assured that either Jerry Ford or Jimmy Carter would be equally vehement against viable working class movements. We can rest assured that the mass media will not project the alternatives. We can *not* rest assured that the alternative will simply happen by itself.

Our history is made by the conscious actions of human beings. Our alternatives — our choices — are created by our action or inaction.



# By God, They Did It!

by Roy Larson



By God, they did it! Not by a wide margin, to be sure. And not with the singleness of purpose that is supposed to characterize the pure in heart. And not without a certain amount of elegant harumphing. But they did it. They, the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies, decided that the "canons for the admission of candidates, and for the ordination to the three orders: Bishops, Priests and Deacons shall be equally applicable to men and women."

Some were glad they did it. They showed their pleasure, not in swaggering strides or triumphalistic shouts, but in quiet smiles, warm hugs, salty tears and murmured prayers of thanksgiving.

Some were not so glad they did it the way they did it. Despite the vote, women still will not be ordained as priests in many dioceses whose bishops and standing committees regard femininity as a bar to orders of the priesthood and episcopate.

Some were just not glad at all. As soon as the results of the balloting were announced, a member of the House of Deputies read a "statement of conscience" which subsequently was endorsed by some 200 deputies. It read:

*"We stand committed to the Episcopal Church, and we are determined to live and work within it. We cannot accept with a good conscience the action of this House. We believe that to do so would violate our ordination vows to be faithful to and to defend the Word of God in Holy Scripture.*

*Furthermore, we cannot acknowledge the authority of this General Convention to decide unilaterally and in the face of the expressed disapproval of our Roman, Old Catholic and Orthodox brethren, a question which ought to be decided by an ecumenical consensus.*

*We ask our brothers in this House to take to heart our resolution. We ask the whole church to take note of our unshaken loyalty to the Episcopal Church, its teachings, its spirituality, its priesthood and sacraments."*

Thirty-eight bishops signed the same declaration the day before when, following the House of Bishops affirmative action on women's ordination, the statement was introduced by Bishop Stanley Atkins of Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Few who were present will forget the hushed moment late in the afternoon on Thursday, September 16, when the House of Deputies vote was announced.

The bishops having approved the canonical change on Wednesday by a vote of 95 to 61, the deputies on Thursday morning decided to delay their considerations of the revised prayer book until they had resolved, for better or for worse, the question of women's ordination. After their noontime lunch break the deputies spent four hours in debate before the mind of the House was determined.

When Dr. John Coburn, the outgoing president of the House, called the session to order shortly after 2 p.m., the vast convention hall was full. Present in the room was the sense of drama that is felt whenever a collected body moves toward one of the unrepeatable moments in its history. The drama was heightened by the fact that the outcome of the voting could not be predicted with any certainty. Most of the political headcounters believed the canonical change would be approved, but with few votes to spare.

For the most part the deputies' debate was a rerun of what took place Wednesday in the House of Bishops.

The proposal was introduced by Dean David Collins of Atlanta, chairman of the committee on ministry. Carefully setting the stage for the debate, Dean Collins reviewed the way the committee had reached its decision. Eager to convince the deputies that all points of view had been listened to in the 43-member committee, he painstakingly described how the committee had decided against the constitutional route of change which would have delayed implementation for at least three more years.

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Roy Larson is religion editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*.



## Conscience Clause Rejected

The chairman went on to explain why the committee decided not to include the "conscience clause" which had been urged as part of a compromise formula at the beginning of the convention by Presiding Bishop John M. Allin. The decision in favor of a "crisp, clear, single motion" was made, Dean Collins reported, after the committee learned that the clause was not even desired by those bishops most strongly opposed to women's ordination. No need was felt, he said, to spell out in explicit form what already was implicit in the existing canon of the church. Everyone seemed agreed that "nobody can require a bishop to accept for ordination a candidate he does not approve of."

In the committee, the chairman reported, the vote to concur with the bishops' action was 28 to 15. Various attempts to override the committee's recommendation were made, but all were defeated. Finally, with all the proposed amendments disposed of, the hour came for final debate. The "hour" lasted *two* hours as 20 speakers made two-minute appeals.

Speakers opposed to women's ordination generally argued that the church must remain faithful to the scriptures and 2000 years of church tradition and not yield to the "secular spirit of the age." Furthermore, they said, the Episcopal Church should not take a "unilateral" step which would jeopardize its ecumenical relationships with the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Advocates of the canonical change, swearing that they too were being faithful to the church's tradition, contended that the tradition must be interpreted anew in response to the "leading of the Holy Spirit." As for ecumenical relations, they appealed for an ecumenical spirit not limited to the pronouncements of hierarchies. They buttressed their case by citing a letter sent to all members of the House of Bishops by Priests for Equality, a new, unofficial Roman Catholic organization that purported to speak for its 1150 members in urging the bishops to take seriously the support for women's ordination that is found among many Roman Catholic priests, sisters and laity. In the end, the delegates appeared to agree with Bishop Paul Moore of New York, who said the Episcopal Church, in its relationships with Catholicism and Orthodoxy, should exercise a "vocation of leadership, not a vocation of consensus."

When, at last, the time came for the vote, the presiding officer observed that the four-hour afternoon session revalidated an ancient truth: "He who endures to the end

shall prevail."

Before the ballots were cast, Dean Collins invited everyone in the hall to stand for five minutes of silent prayer. Once the votes were counted, Dr. Coburn asked the deputies and visitors to respond only with silent utterances to God.

## Clergy Vote Eked By

The vote was so close that a small handful of clergymen could have changed the result. In the clergy order, there were 60 "yes" votes, 38 "no" votes, and 16 divided delegations whose votes were counted on the "no" side. In the lay order, there were 64 "yes" votes, 37 "no" votes, and 12 divided delegations. Afterwards, a member of the minority bloc read into the record the statement of conscience declaring, in effect, that those who lost "will not bolt the church" though "we cannot accept with a good conscience the action of this House."

Once this was done, the Rev. Massey Shepherd, chaplain of the House, invited the members to join him in a traditional prayer for the church:

*"Gracious Father, we pray for thy Holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Savior. Amen."*

Following adjournment, several members of the secular press corps, who had observed first hand the conduct of countless church conventions, commented on the high level of civility that characterized the debate. One wrote: "At its worst, the Anglican Ethos expresses itself in preciousness and pretentious posturing. At its best, it expresses itself in a level of discourse where the quality of mercy, imbedded in the words of the liturgy, mellows the spirit of the church and reduces the harshness of debate."

What does it all mean? Several things:

- In most dioceses of the Episcopal Church in the United States, women have won their claim to be first class members of the household of God.
- It takes off the hook those bishops, standing committees and seminary officials who have favored women's ordination, but have wanted to work through approved channels.
- It appears that the likelihood of a widescale schism has been prevented as a result of the spirit of



accommodation that generally prevailed. No bishop was left in a position where he could convincingly claim his conscience had been raped.

- Although protected by existing canons from being forced to accept women candidates for the priesthood, those bishops who reject women priests because they are women still may be subject to civil court proceedings although, at the moment, most everyone seems to hope differences can be resolved within the family.

In many ways, as one deputy pointed out, the final result was a form of "typical Anglican ambiguity." Instead of the unauthorized chaos that has characterized the church since the 1974 Philadelphia ordinations, what will now obtain is a form of authorized chaos.

Does sagacity always express itself in audacious ways?

"Yes," say those who point to the beatitude which proclaims, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." "Purity of heart," they contend, "is to will one thing." In the course of action it has taken, they say, the church either has been doubleminded or else it has wrongly and singlemindedly given a greater priority to church unity than to simple justice.

On the other hand, there are those who would agree with Reinhold Niebuhr that, in ambiguous situations, Christians are called to be responsible rather than pure.

## An Election Year Hope

As humankind struggles for survival and a better life, we covet for our country

**LEADERSHIP** in solving the world's most urgent problems — war, injustice, hunger, disease, poverty, overpopulation, pollution

**LEADERSHIP** in ending the immensely dangerous arms race, and replacing global anarchy with an equitable system of international order

**LEADERSHIP** in building a society at home and abroad based on cooperation, non-violence, mutual benefit, and respect

**LEADERSHIP** in promoting values which stress quality of life rather than quantity of material things

Will future generations praise or curse us for our role in human history?

—Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Washington D.C.

Letters continued from page 2

## Interior Connections?

Today I received in my mail the August issue of THE WITNESS and am writing to say that I am very interested in the aims and objectives of Church and Society, that I read the issues of THE WITNESS immediately upon getting them, and that I shall pray for the spread of convictions such as I find in these writings.

I am a priest of the Anglican Church of Canada in the interior of British Columbia, and am wondering if you have contact with any Canadians in my area. If you do, I should be delighted to hear who they are so that we might meet and talk further.

My wife and I are active in a local ecumenical development education group and would be pleased to link in to common concerns which reach across our international border.

James A. McCullum  
Kelowna, B.C.

## Intrigued by Network

Have just completed the reading of Ms. Alice Dieter's article about the Church and Society Network. It intrigues me — in this time when some of us are losing sight of the social imperative of the Gospel.

Yes, I am interested — would like to learn more, and if there is a local grouping which I might collaborate with.

In the event that you care, I am ordained, and am a Portuguese Christian (Old Catholic), presently working with youth at the University of Rhode Island.

Phillip B. Avila-Oliver  
Kingston, Rhode Island

## Definition Fits

After reading your definition of Church and Society in the August issue of THE WITNESS, I was struck by how the Oberlin Community fits the definition of a "Local Chapter". At our last community business meeting I read the definition given in that article to the members of our community. They have asked me to write to you for further information.

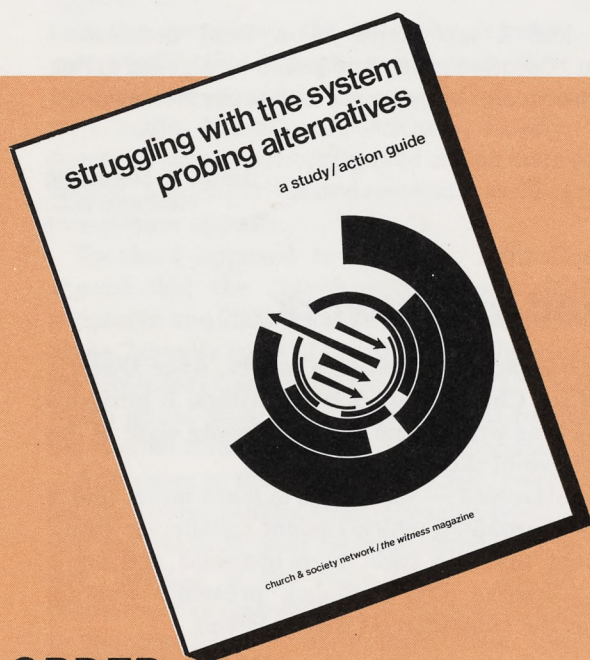
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A 200-page Study/Action Guide entitled *Struggling With the System, Probing Alternatives* is now available to you and/or your study group.

Produced by the Church and Society Network in collaboration with THE WITNESS magazine, the guide was designed to assist local groups in their struggle to understand the nature of oppression and to explore ways out of it.

The Guide focuses on such questions as *Why is our society dysfunctional for so many people? How might it be different? What are some forms of group action at the local level which can test our tentative theories and at the same time make a positive contribution?*

Designed that a group might move collectively through 11 sessions, the guide embraces the history of social concern on the part of the church; the theological convictions which have kept that concern alive; social analysis and a glimpse of some alternative societies, and suggestions as to how the foregoing relate to celebration and corporate worship.

- ☐ Enclosed is \$5.75 (includes postage and handling) for a single copy of the Study/Action Guide. (Please make check payable to Church and Society).
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