

THE VOL. 66 NO. 5 MAY, 1983 **WITNESS**

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After the Trip, What Social Message?

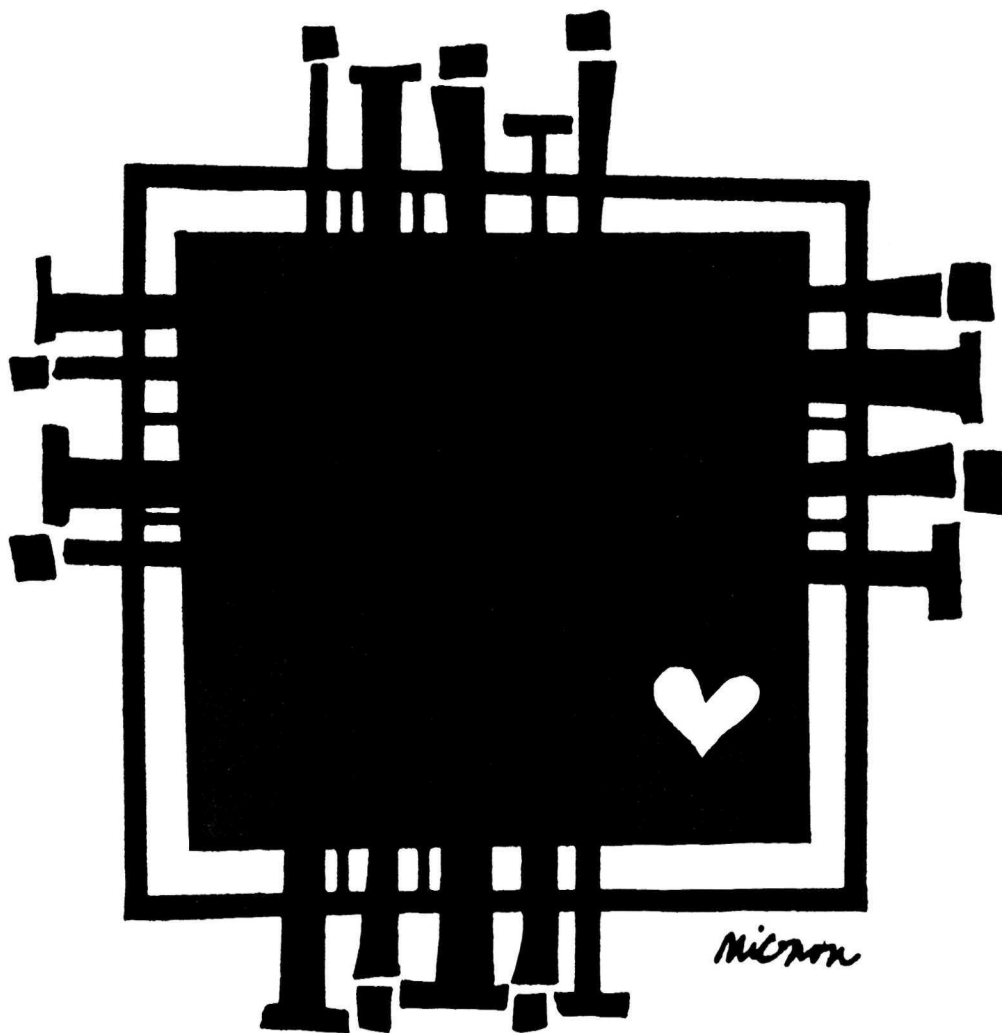
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EPF Rude, Arrogant

My attention has been drawn to an article by Nat Pierce, "When Does Prayer Become Political?" in your February issue in which I am quoted by the author in negative terms for my opposition to the behavior of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship at a service at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York, where I was then a canon.

Both Canon West and I were offended by the rude behavior of the EPF which offended most of the congregation because of its arrogance, not its cause. The letter I wrote to the *New York Times* following the service was widely appreciated, and Canon West's response by offering "prayer on demand" was, after all, about the only thing he could do as celebrant in order to end the disturbing interruption. I, too, commend him for that.

At another occasion at the Washington Cathedral, the EPF exhibited its rudeness at the consecration of a suffragan bishop for the armed forces, a mission of the Episcopal Church to those who accept certain obligations of citizenship at the risk of their lives. But even a bishop's consecration became a platform for the EPF to stage another tantrum under the gothic arch.

My reaction to both of those events was, and is, that they were as inappropriate and insensitive to both the holy occasions and the worshippers present as would be a demonstration on family planning or birth control at a wedding. That was my point then and now. It would be good to record some personal sacrifice by Mr. Pierce in the cause of peace beyond mere demonstrations.

The Rev. Canon Peter Chase
Greenfield, Mass.

Pierce Responds

It is good to hear from Canon Chase once again. Re the behavior that Canon Chase claims of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship at the service of St. John the Divine's as being arrogant and rude: I would simply like to note that the news report about our action which was carried in the *New York Times* makes absolutely no mention of this.

Canon Chase, of course, is entitled to his opinion of what I perceive to be the continuing scandal of the Episcopal Church's consecration of a suffragan bishop for the Armed Forces as the world faces nuclear holocaust.

The Rev. Nathaniel W. Pierce
Nampa, Idaho

Reagan Causing Strain

You have one of the best magazines published. I love your attitude on race and human rights. I have never seen as dangerous a time as the one we are living. American politicians want to blow up the world. The Reagan Administration has put many of us old people under a mental strain. I am 73 years old, very disabled, in constant pain. Death will come as a merciful liberator.

Emory Ray Bays
Charleston, W.V.

On Prayer List

I am perfectly amazed at how you can continue to publish such articles in the name of Christianity. I am going to add you and the majority of your writers to my prayer list. All of you might benefit from a quiet weekend in the country with nothing but yourselves, your Bibles and God.

Donald MacLean Bell
Louisville, Ky.

Native American Protest

I am writing in regard to your February article, "Our Ideal New Presiding Bishop." In your preface to this piece,

you point out that THE WITNESS asked for the reflections of "seven constituencies" whom you serve: Women, Blacks, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Homosexuals, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, and the Episcopal Urban Caucus. Their responses were both interesting and informative, but incomplete. Once again, as an American Indian member of this church, I looked for the viewpoint and voice of my own people and found it missing.

I suppose I could assume that the native people of this church and nation are not to be counted among your constituents, but I have too much respect for THE WITNESS to do so. Obviously the issues you raise are of major concern to the Indian people. When you speak of poverty, injustice, oppression, hunger, racism; you are speaking a language that every Indian or Native Alaskan person understands. When you raise a question like "What characteristics would you like to see in the new Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church," you are asking something that native people would like to answer for themselves.

Why were they not given that opportunity?

One response might be that their answer is *implicit* in the reflections of the seven groups you chose to include in your article. The logic here, of course, is the inverted racism that supposes "if you've heard from one minority group, you've heard from them all." I would be very much surprised if any other representative from your panel would be comfortable with that principle. Although there is a great deal that we share in common with the struggles and aspirations of other people, there is a great deal more that we have to say which is absolutely unique to our own culture and historic experience. No one else can speak for us. No one else can state our case as surrogates for the native community. For almost five hundred years other voices have been only too eager to do the talking for the Indian people.

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THE WITNESS

Editorial

Hubris or God's Will?

President Reagan recently regaled an audience of evangelical preachers, against the background of "Onward, Christian Soldiers," with words of assurance that "America is great because America is good." He went on to proclaim that this nation's spiritual superiority knows no limit, and "must terrify and ultimately triumph over those who would enslave their fellow man (sic)." These are dangerous utterances. When the President, or we, for that matter, associate the ultimate standards of divine judgment with our own performance, we are assuming a posture of self-righteous assurance which is dangerously self-deceptive.

God is God, and God is One. There is no other final arbiter of human affairs. In linking our public affairs and our national life with that divine judgment, we are exposing our nation to the test of ultimate truth, whatever the verdict, whatever the cost, whatever the penalty.

So be it. The God of history, finally, will deliver that verdict. But how do a people discern that divine will, so their consequent actions may be more in conformance, and thus more deserving of divine favor than of divine wrath?

There are those who, in answer, would urge us to parse the divine

sentence — to make a neat analysis of the responsibility for reading the signs of the times and discerning the will of God, as we separate subjects from predicates. They would, for example, leave matters of public policy entirely in the hands of officials — a sure prescription for disastrous tyranny, and reserve to others only the sphere of private morality. This would be a proven way to trivialize the will of God. They would indict the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic bishops in the efforts of those groups to proclaim the Word of God to our national life.

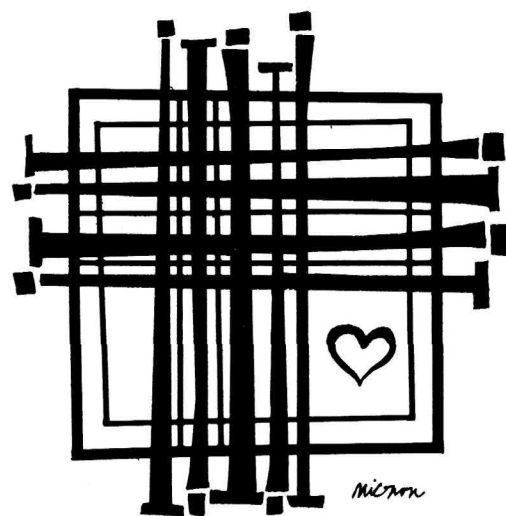
Far differently do we learn from our spiritual heritage. God speaks to God's people — all of them. Our biblical heritage teaches us that there will always be those raised up to speak forth in response, to the glory of God and to the welfare of God's people. From such unlikely sources (so the world judged) as Amos, a dresser of sycamore trees, and a certain carpenter of Nazareth, have come proclamations of divine insights that have altered the course of the world and provided a plumb line for public policy. Both were adjudged then to have been "interfering," to have confused their syntax, to have reversed

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*"It is healthier, intellectually and spiritually,
to belong to a 'Yes, but' community
of believers than to a 'Yes, absolutely' community."*

The Biblical Ambiguities of Peace

by John E. Hines



Perhaps the most quoted words about peace ascribed to Jesus are from The Beatitudes: *"Blessed are the peace-makers. They shall be called children of God."* In nearly 50 years of ministry, I attempted to preach on that thesis only once. That was 40 years ago. As I recall that homiletical gem, I attacked the theme heroically, decisively, and some say, having watched the clock, definitively! I was strongly influenced then by the wave of Christian pacifism spawned in the wake of World War I — the "war to end all wars." But with the German invasion of the Benelux countries and France by Adolf Hitler's Panzers, anyone could see that a more effective tactic would be required, not only of pacifists, but of all Christians, if ever justice was to be served and the

world was to have peace worthy of the name.

I still recognize the kind of non-violence that can become "absolute," as an interpretation of the Gospel. But I live, thus far, under the persuasion that peace is a more complex matter than some pacifists recognize — even as justice is more complex, and mercy is more complex, and love is more complex, than most Christians are willing to admit.

In scripture, the words, "Peace I leave with you. My peace give I unto you," carry the valedictory assurance of Jesus. But also from the lips and heart of Jesus, as he weeps over the great, mad city of Jerusalem, come the words, "If thou hadst known, even in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!"

Obviously, we are not the New Jerusalem. That iridescent vision still shines ahead of the church, far out of our present reach. We are still the Old

Jerusalem that stones the prophets and destroys the messages and the messengers sent to us by an undiscourageable God. And we are the Old Jerusalem over whom Jesus must weep, time and time again, in frustration and unrequited love. If we really understand this, we still can pose the question: "What are the things that belong to our peace?"

It belongs to our peace, as a part of the mystical body of Christ on this earth, to tolerate (yea, cultivate) honest self-criticism, the studied pursuit of objectivity; and in our pursuit of the truth to be resolved to reject partisan exclusivity, lest our zeal for purity of doctrine and dominion over principalities and powers, seduce us into fighting against Jesus Christ and the truths he incarnated at so great a cost.

Calculated ambiguities seem to modify the exclusivity in the testimony of Jesus about himself, when we hear him say: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." An example of this

John E. Hines is former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. The above is excerpted from his recent address to the 109th annual convention of the Diocese of Newark.

appears in a passing incident recorded in the Gospels, about the way Jesus deals with disciples (not of his calling) whose humane concerns, and impressive results, appeared to intersect his own ministry.

Following a scene in which Jesus' own disciples play the central role of healer and restorer, those same disciples come to Jesus in great indignation, telling him that they had seen others — who followed not Jesus — heal and cast out demons. "Forbid them!" they pleaded, "for they do not follow you." But Jesus said, "Leave them alone. He that is not against me is for me." What an early indication of the catholicity of Jesus' compassion, and the limitless character of his love!

As one might guess, there was evidence of an alleged "trendy-ness" in the community of believers. It was a "trendy-ness" that disturbed the disciples of the inner circle. They felt that they were the in-group, and justly could chastise any intruders who might spoil both their purity and their monopoly of God's grace. But Jesus supports the intruders in their zeal for good. He knew that there were wider dimensions of truth to be explored than even he and his disciples could, within the time allotted. He recognized the necessary open-endedness of God's self-revelation in a changing world. And he knew that it is healthier — intellectually and spiritually — to belong to a "Yes, but" community of believers than to a "Yes, absolutely" community. A deposit of wisdom that captured the skeptical Thomas, and has frequently saved the church from self-destruction!

The world is filling up today with zealots who seek to purify that Christian witness and rescue Christian commitment from what, to them, smacks of diversity, compromise, indecisiveness, and weakness. Much of this fervor springs from a return to a biblical literalism we thought discredited 60

years ago. Its self-created authority idol pushes its devotees into a simplistic dogmatism that can brook no criticism nor self-examination. Its granite-like hardness renders the Gospel static. And its overly spiritualized caricature of Jesus Christ undercuts the explicitly secular impact of the Gospel ("For God so loved the world") leaving those whom it seduces with a bloodless imitation — a disincarnate Gospel.

There is a certain quality of peace — spurious in my view — that can come to an individual, or to an institution, willing to freeze the status quo, and settle for the uncritical acceptance of dogmas handed down unchanged from one hierarchy to another. For a time, this spurious peace may promote a kind of conflict-free harmony within a thoroughly insulated community of believers. But from the perspective of the Cross of Calvary it is surely a fool's paradise, bereft of any meaningful undergirding by the New Testament witness — and powerless to rescue a suffering world.

In this mysterious world, fiercely torn between great beauty and devastating danger, I would opt for a meaningful peace somewhere within the complex searchings of a poignantly memorable figure in the Anglican tradition's quest for truth:

"I have never found certitude easy" (said this man). "Beliefs grow slowly in my mind, changing shape as they gain a fresh insight, or shed what seems to be an error. It is not a process that leads naturally to a conclusion. This can be an advantage in the ordinary intercourse of life. One is better able to understand other people if one's ideas have not yet hardened, and can be stretched without loss of integrity to accommodate theirs.

"The difficulty is to know when the 'limits of understanding' are reached. There always seems to be

one more step that can be taken without danger in fellowship. Harmony is a great good, but there are others greater, for whose sake it must be, in the last resort, renounced. If only I could see them more clearly, I could, I hope, find the courage to die for them; but my mind still gropes in vain. It is an agonizing task to define the principles for which a man must condemn his living body to the flame."

That was Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury — enroute to the stake.

It belongs to the church's true peace to reject the easy rationalizations, with which even her own people often tempt her into passionless disengagement, detached from the blood-bespattered face that history wears today. And it belongs to the church's true peace to sound the alarm against those who callously trade in oppression, exploiting the poor and the voiceless and the powerless of this world.

Currently, in a Federal District Court in Brooklyn, a painful episode in American justice is being worked out. Five self-styled advocates of Puerto Rican independence, all of them Hispanics, have been ordered to stand trial on criminal contempt charges.

One of the defendants is Maria Cueto, of Los Angeles, one-time Executive Director of the Episcopal Church's National Commission on Hispanic Affairs. This is the second time around for Ms. Cueto. In 1977, with others, she refused to testify before a Grand Jury empaneled around the same theme of terrorist bombings attributed to the FALN. By her own testimony, she is not a member of the FALN. She served 10 months in prison for her conscience' sake. And because she held her lay ministry in the Episcopal Church a sacred relationship of confidentiality which, if breached, would have dam-

aged this church's credibility in the eyes of the Hispanic people. Eventually, she was released by a judge who could see that her imprisonment served no constructive purpose. But this is a different Grand Jury. The charade goes on.

This is not a 20th century "Dreyfus case" that will attract wide attention. I dare say there are not 500 Episcopalians who could identify Maria Cueto. But here is the kind of uncertain cause that makes fair-weather friends vanish quickly, and intimidates some cautious Episcopal Church officials into "chronic laryngitis" and embarrassed silence.

No doubt, there are those who see Maria Cueto's supporters as naive, at best, or fellow travelers with the violent, at worst. Too often, that is the lot of those who, for conscience' sake or for Christ's sake, support "the uncertain causes" of the marginal, the voiceless, the powerless, and the oppressed. It was the same with Jesus — inveterate rescuer of "uncertain causes." And if it is faithful, it can only be the same for a servant church. For such divine foolhardiness surely belongs to the church's true peace.

As much as I yearn for it, and as much as I am dependent upon the Christian doctrine of grace, I do not believe that peace is a gift — something conferred like an autumn sunset, or a star-studded sky on a clear winter's night. I believe that for it to be real, men and women must earn it, must work and sacrifice for it ceaselessly. When Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace give I unto you" (this is sheer presumption on my part), those words must be evaluated against a prior soul-searching caveat; his exhortation to those who would come after him to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow him. And those words must also be evaluated against the ominous, looming, hard reality of Calvary's Cross, against which, in a cosmic act of faith and self-giving, Jesus demonstrated the shattering dimensions of that peace. ■

The Other Woman

There is another woman in my life.

She stands among the shadows of my conscience
staring.

I see her face in magazines and papers,
her children gathered close,
stomachs distended,
ribs too prominent,
unchildlike in their silence,
waiting.

I see her on the evening news
sleeping under bridges with her bags and babies,
or lining up for help at agencies.

She does not plead or raise her hands.

She stands impassive.

Hunger has sapped the animation from her face.

Only her eyes are alive,
searing,

not with accusation but with numbness.

And I, across the town from her,
or across the world,

feel her here, nearby. She makes me doubt my life.

Why have I so much?

Why has she so little?

I feel apologetic for my own strong children,
advantaged,
accomplished,

who through no fault or wisdom of my own
achieve their goals calmly
as though health
and happiness
were the only possibility.

As I choose my food from grocery shelves

(shall we have beef or veal today? I ask myself)

I see the face of that other woman

who has no choices.

As I wrap my bundle of used clothing,

as I write my pledge check,

as I drop a coin in the mission box,

she stands watching uncritically,
unable to express the vastness of her need.

But her eyes! Her eyes!

They are my reprimand.

They are her glory.

And she? She is my chance for heaven.

— Ann R. Blakeslee

Social Gospel's Message for Today

by Susan Lindley

Particular religious movements in the church's history go through cycles of interest and obscurity, conventional interpretation and revision. One such movement that ought to be coming in for renewed interest is the American Social Gospel, not only for scholars and pastors but also for all concerned contemporary Christians. Despite their limitations and weaknesses, the men and women who were part of the Social Gospel movement in America had some significant insights on the meaning of Christianity and the task of the church which can be helpful today.

First, a brief historical reminder. The Social Gospel movement in American religious history arose in the latter part of the 19th century and reached its peak just prior to World War I. Its leaders attempted to interpret the Christian Gospel to the needs of their age, focusing especially on the problems of the emerging labor movement and on structures of the American economic and political system.

The belief that the Gospel has a social dimension, that is, the conviction that Christians are to be concerned and active in the life of this world and the structures of their community, is at the heart of American religious tradition.

Susan H. Lindley, an Episcopalian mother of three, is Assistant Professor of Religion at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.

Beginning with the Holy Commonwealth of the Massachusetts Puritans and the Holy Experiment of William Penn, American colonial Christians saw as a central part of their calling the demand to shape their community structures as well as their personal lives in accordance with their perception of God's will. The question of whether Christians should get involved in politics is not a debate that began with the Social Gospel — let alone the civil rights activists of the 1960s or the Moral Majority of the 1980s — rather, the relevance of Christian belief to social conditions is deeply rooted in American religious tradition.

The roots of the Social Gospel in America are found in 19th century theological liberalism with its emphasis on a benevolent God, the worth and dignity of each person, and the Kingdom of God as the center of Jesus' message. These roots are also found in evangelical Christianity of the last century with its revivalism, perfectionism, and insistence that conversion must result in the fruits of a Christian life — manifest in anti-slavery, temperance, concern for prisoners, the handicapped, women's rights, etc. Nor were the Social Gospel's roots confined to America. Especially significant was the English movement of Christian Socialism in the mid-19th century under the leadership of F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley. These English connections were particularly important for American Episcopalians

who were involved with the Social Gospel, as a good many were.

But particular conditions in the United States in the second half of the 19th century were decisive for the shape of the Social Gospel. Urbanization, industrialization, and immigration were rapidly changing the face of American life and society, and the Social Gospel was one attempt by American Christians to respond to new problems and new issues.

The Social Gospel made a significant positive contribution to American Christianity in its clear voice of social concern and especially in awareness of urban labor as a burning issue of the age. It attacked complacency in the churches, with their narrow conception of what Christian faith involved, and in so doing sounded a genuinely prophetic note. It contributed positively to Christian ecumenism in its insistence on inter-denominational cooperation, especially on social issues.

On the other hand, the Social Gospel was definitely a middle-class movement, despite its concern with labor. One finds in the Social Gospel the unconscious assumption of U.S. middle-class values and goals and an equation of these with Christianity; its leaders seldom if ever questioned the superiority of middle-class culture and standards. Thus, they tended to identify the Kingdom of God particularly with the democracy and evangelical Christianity of "God's

chosen nation" — the United States.

Second, the focus on urban labor which gave the Social Gospel the strength of immediacy and relevance was also a weakness, for the Social Gospel largely ignored other important social issues of its day, especially the racial situation. To be fair, there was at least occasional attention to the problems of race, and even the limited concern and sensitivity of Social Gospelers on race issues compared favorably with dominant American attitudes of the time.

Finally, and most typically, the Social Gospel has been criticized for its lack of theological depth and its optimism, even naivete. Many of the leaders lacked a profound sense of sin, its depth and pervasiveness in human nature and history. Their faith in the ease with which the Kingdom of God could be established on earth was touching, but, from a 20th century perspective, unjustified, as was their certainty that they could delineate with fair precision the shape and nature of that Kingdom. Yet the charge of naive optimism often levelled at the Social Gospel is somewhat simplistic. While there were Social Gospel leaders who seemed unaware of any serious difficulties in the progressive

realization of the Kingdom of God on earth, (even its most sophisticated and perceptive leaders showed more confidence in evolutionary progress than a late 20th century perspective can muster), it is also true that there was not uniformity of thought within the Social Gospel. Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps* is not the theology of Walter Rauschenbusch. Let a quotation from Rauschenbusch illustrate here:

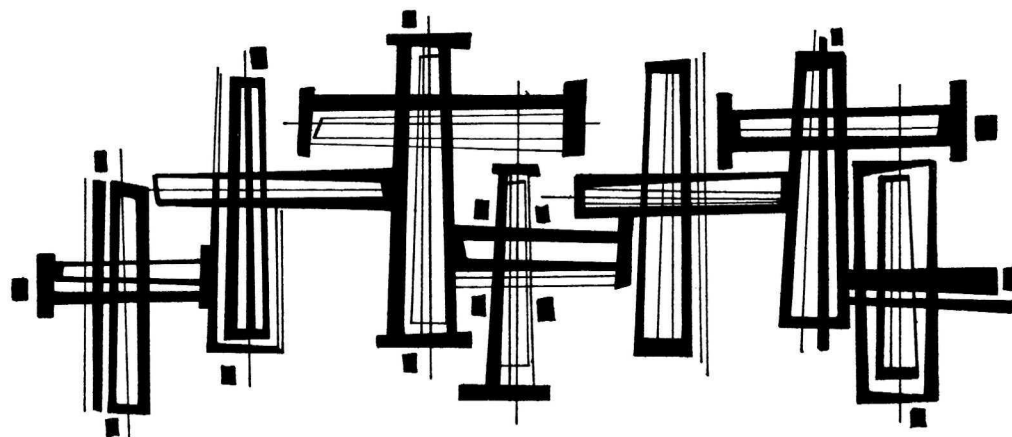
"In asking for faith in the possibility of a new social order, we ask for no Utopian delusion. We know well that there is no perfection for man in this life: there is only growth toward perfection. In personal religion we look with seasoned suspicion at anyone who claims to be holy and perfect, yet we always tell men to become holy and seek perfection. We make it a duty to seek what is unattainable. We have the same paradox in the perfectibility of society. We shall never have a perfect social life, yet we must seek it with faith."

The similarity between these words of Rauschenbusch and the ideas expressed in Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* is striking, especially

since the latter work is commonly regarded as a decisive refutation of the Social Gospel!

There is a further danger in dismissing the Social Gospel for its supposed theological inadequacy. European Neo-Orthodoxy and the American Christian Realism of the Niebuhrs launched a devastating critique on the Social Gospel, primarily at the theological level. They felt it had failed to grasp the depth of human sinfulness, or to comprehend the otherness and transcendence of God. They criticized the Social Gospel for making Christianity and the church means to an end, and failed to recognize their unique role. They scorned what they saw as the Social Gospel's naive hope of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth in a particular political or economic system, without maintaining the element of divine and transcendent judgment on all human (and thus necessarily imperfect) efforts. But they did *not* reject its passion for social justice.

John C. Bennett notes that Reinhold Niebuhr was critical of the Social Gospel's view of progress, but adds, "for many years his commitments in regard to social justice were more radical than the Social Gospel." A move "right"



**I WILL PRAISE YOU, LORD,
FOR YOU HAVE RESCUED ME.**

theologically did not mean, for these early critics, a move to the political right. *And yet*, it was precisely this point — the passion for social justice as a Christian imperative — that too many in later generations “forgot,” justifying their lack of concern by the “fact” that the Social Gospel had been discredited for the theologically sophisticated by Neo-Orthodoxy. To put the argument in the form of a metaphor: Where Christian Realism may have wanted to throw out the bath but preserve the baby, too many later American Christians misused that action as an excuse for throwing out both — especially since social justice is such a troublesome baby!

So, what might we learn from a revision of the Social Gospel? Before summarizing some of its enduring theological insights, one should note how important biblical authority and sources were for the movement’s leaders. Their core image was the Kingdom of God as they found and understood it in the teachings of Jesus, and they also found critical biblical resources and authority in the Hebrew prophets. It is no accident, therefore, nor should it be surprising, that these themes might sound familiar to students of liberation theology, which also sees biblical authority and resources as central.

The “Social” Gospel was well-named, for among its most enduring contributions are those which concern the social nature of religion. First, there was the concept of collective identity, a reaction against an individualistic view which seemed to see each person as isolated, divorced from a particular context, both in terms of destiny and responsibility. Rather, the Social Gospel emphasized the organic reality of the collective and the unavoidable impact of one’s environment on identity. One is not human in isolation.

Second, the Social Gospel and Walter Rauschenbusch in particular presented

a social concept of sin, rather than a view of sin as primarily personal and individual. Where orthodox theology had indeed seen sin as corporate insofar as it spoke of the condition of original sin in which all humanity was bound together, one could escape that corporate identity by individual election or conversion. Not so, said the Social Gospel. One cannot opt out of responsibility for collective, social sin. Nor is it enough for the individual to refrain from direct participation in social sins, for he or she still benefits from unjust social structures. As Rauschenbusch noted in *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, humanity was not simply one in Adam but also one in Christ; salvation is not merely individual but necessarily social — “. . . a salvation confined to the soul and its personal interests is an imperfect and only partly effective salvation.”

Third, and related, was the perception that structures and institutions, as well as individuals, may be sinful and thus come under religious judgment. It is insufficient to change individual hearts within a system which is basically unjust or corrupt. Not only do some individuals sin by their active or inactive participation in such systems, and the unjust benefit they derive therefrom, but also the victims of the structures are dehumanized and restricted, if not stunted, in the development of their moral and human potential. And the sin inherent in such structures and systems necessarily infects generation after generation living under them. In sum, a central theological insight of the Social Gospel was its recognition of the social nature of sin and salvation, and the reality of collective identity.

A further contribution of the Social Gospel was its method of grounding theology in experience, in the concrete and immediate context in which one finds oneself. Social Gospel leaders were often skeptical of “intellectualizing,” of

what they perceived as abstract dogma. It may well be that they were too skeptical sometimes, failing to see that much of the dogma they condemned arose precisely in response to given contexts and experiences, though different from the Social Gospel’s late 19th century America. Nevertheless, their practice of grounding theology was a sound one and is not dissimilar to what liberation theologians today call praxis.

Finally, Social Gospel Christians had a real sense of the God who works *in history*, not a God who only plucks individual brands from the burning. They thus took the core biblical doctrines of a good creation and of redemption very seriously, and not just in an individualistic sense. Though they never denied that individual souls could and must be saved, they equally refused to read God out of the workings and destiny of God’s creation. For them, the Kingdom of God was a present reality and demand as well as a future hope.

It is perhaps more difficult for Christians in a post-nuclear age to share the confidence of the Social Gospelers in the God who works in history and seemed to them to be making substantial progress. Here the warning of the movement’s critics to avoid identification of any specific, finite system with the ultimate will of God was well-taken, although it did not and does not mean that all systems are therefore equal, or that one cannot make specific criticisms in a given situation from a Christian perspective. Christians must believe and act in a particular time and place, with its concrete problems and possibilities, not in the context of an abstract ideal, for the theological assertion and biblical promise of God’s action in history stand intact. And to be able to affirm God’s continuing work in history, God’s will to redeem creation, and to share in that work in the face of empirical evidence and obstacles, require a formidable leap of faith. ■



John Paul II's Caribbean Basin Initiative:

After the Trip, What Social Message?

by Tom Quigley

The Pope and the President, uneasily coupled, combined in early March to refocus world attention on Central America.

Vying for top billing on almost every day's media coverage of the papal trip was the latest Administration war bulletin: the Salvadorean government was about to collapse, its army down to a month's supply of ammunition, an additional \$60 million might be needed, will be needed, will be sent even if it means end-running the Congress, then \$110 million—part of \$298 million for Central America this year—and the once-interred Haigean theology on East and West was dusted off, shined up and pushed to center stage.

This Manichean dualism, first loosed by the New Right and at least encouraged by the Administration, has surfaced lately in even sharper terms than before. Haig had been content to bumble on that the four U.S. missionary women killed in El Salvador were running a roadblock, and Kirkpatrick to mutter ominously that the nuns were not just

nuns but, horrors, political activists. But George Shultz's recent quote about those churchmen who want to see Soviet influence increased in El Salvador was a qualitative leap. Some analysts assume that the almost simultaneous musings of the Vice-President about Marxist priests were less pre-meditated than the Secretary's, but stemmed from the same source, possibly a briefing paper on the church and Latin America currently circulating at the highest levels.

The timing, of course, was largely coincidental. The New Right critics of what they consider "meddlesome clerics" had more than the Pope's Central American trip on their minds but it is no secret that they, and the Administration, were worried about what might come out of the trip.

Now that it's over, some can be heard crowing about the boost the Pope gave to the conservative hard-liners in the region, instancing almost exclusively the talks and events of one day, a Lenten Friday in Nicaragua. There is no question that the Pope's words there on educational freedom, on ideologies, and on ecclesial unity were particularly firm, though hardly surprising. What surprised all

Thomas E. Quigley is adviser on Latin American and Caribbean Affairs at the U.S. Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C.

was the most unfortunate turn of events at the papal Mass.

As the huge crowd in the plaza that sweltering afternoon began to chant their conflicting slogans, there was no authority able to pull it all back together. Frustration and disappointment more than anger and hostility, certainly more than intended disrespect, finally carried the day. However compelling the Monday morning explanations, the fact remains — images seared into much of the TV world's consciousness — that it was a symbolic and diplomatic disaster.

But it was not the whole trip. Here's a more accurate synopsis of what the Pope said and did in Central America.

In Costa Rica, he began his pilgrimage of peace with language reminiscent of the oft-quoted "Cry of the People" words of the Puebla document. At Puebla the Roman Catholic bishops said, "From the heart of Latin America, a cry rises to the heavens ever louder and more imperative. It is the cry of a people who suffer and who demand justice, freedom, and respect for the fundamental rights of man." In San Jose the Pope spoke of "the tortured cry which these lands raise and which invokes peace, the end of war and violent death. . .it implores reconciliation, which can banish hatred. It

yearns for a justice which has been long, and until today, vainly awaited."

He told the young that they had "to create a better world than that of your ancestors," otherwise "blood will continue to flow and tomorrow's tears will give witness to the sorrows of your children."

He urged that the problems of the region be confronted "in a sincere dialogue, without foreign interference," a first reference to the internationalist and interventionist component of the region's crisis.

If that was even-handed criticism of both the United States and, presumably, the Soviet Union, he also in Costa Rica made the first of several references to the dangers of both competing worldviews: "collectivist systems that can prove no less oppressive to the dignity of man than pure economic capitalism."

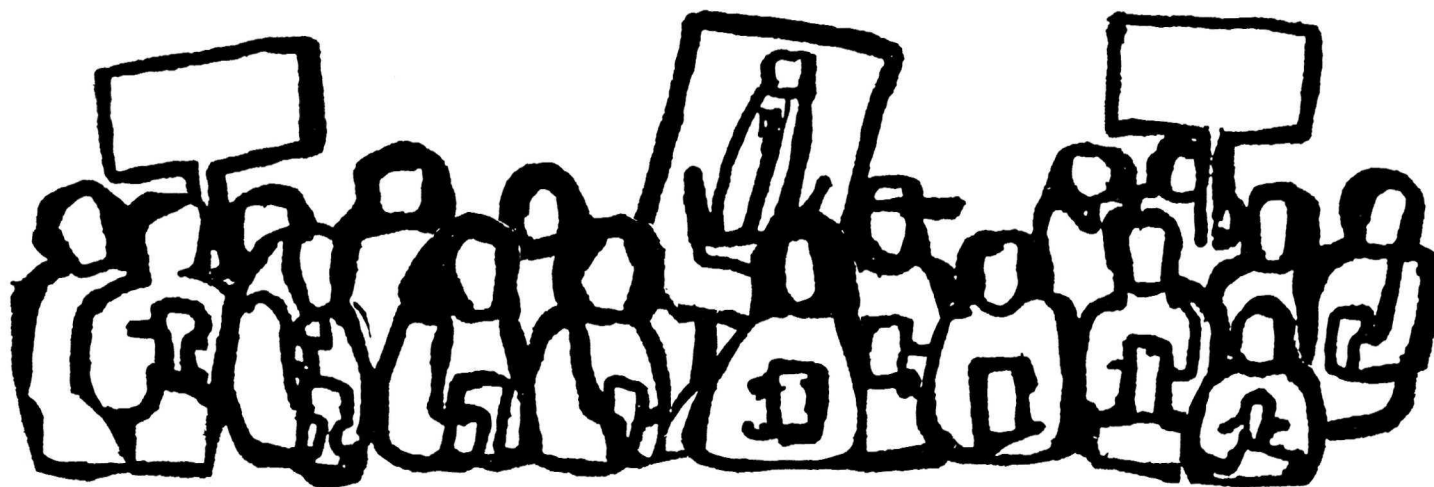
In El Salvador, he called for all to "overcome the obstacles to dialogue," said the church should promote reconciliation, and observed that people want to live "in a climate of democratic co-existence." He pointedly expressed the hope that "all may have the possibility of collaborating in the promotion of the common good in a climate of true democracy."

He departed from the announced schedule and went first to the tomb of slain Archbishop Oscar Romero, whom he described as the "zealous pastor whose love of God and his brothers and sisters led him to the very giving up of his life" and as one "who tried. . .to end the violence and to re-establish peace."

In apparent reference to Salvadorean governmental attempts to divide the opposition into reasonable but misguided democrats and their more radical allies, with whom no accommodation is anticipated, the Pope emphasized that "nobody should be excluded from the effort for peace."

In Guatemala, where the government had executed six men virtually on the eve of his visit despite repeated papal appeals for clemency, he condemned violence and discrimination against the Indian peasants and against the church. And in the face of what the Guatemalan bishops have called the rapid spread of a disincarnate spirituality, a religious phenomenon emphasizing "faith without works," he preached a pair of homilies that could well be included in a book of readings on liberation theology.

In Belize, poor but peaceful, where both the violent clash of classes and the bitter hostility between socially-con-



cerned Christians and their fundamentalist brethren is relatively attenuated, he stressed ecumenism. With representatives of the Methodist and Anglican communions at his side, he insisted that "unity is not to be dismissed as impossible or unnecessary" and that "division is not to be accepted as a necessary evil."

But, addressing the fifth of the Belizean population that turned out to greet him at the airport, he had harsh words for the "aggressive proselytism" of those fundamentalist groups, largely U.S.-based and funded, "that disturbs and wounds, sometimes even with unworthy methods, the degree of unity which an ecclesial community already possesses."

Haitian Plight Scored

Finally, in Haiti, he delivered one of the strongest criticisms of existing social conditions of the entire trip. There is "division, injustice, excessive inequality, degradation of the quality of life, poverty, hunger, fear. . . peasants unable to make a living from their land, people crowded without work in the cities, families broken up and displaced. . .

"There is truly a profound need for justice," he went on, "of a better distribution of goods, of more equitable organization of society, with more participation, a more disinterested concept of service to all on the part of those with responsibilities. . ."

These words, many more of which could be cited, formed the core of the Pope's message to the people of Central America. (In a visit that was primarily pastoral, it should be obvious that the main focus of his talks dealt with the life of the church, expressed in specific discourses to men and women religious, priests and bishops, catechists and seminarians and, while outside the scope of this article, also consistently stressed the themes of justice, reconciliation and peace.)

In short, what we have in this papal trip is a dramatic visual re-presentation

of the modern church's fundamental concerns and teachings. The Pope offered a running commentary on Roman Catholic social doctrine within the context of Central America.

None of it was new. Not only has it all been said before but *he* has said it before, often enough with that same Latin or Central American context in mind, as in his several letters to Central American episcopates in the last three years and his talks in Mexico and Brazil.

But one should not minimize the value of this kind of repetition. The very compression of the many statements in the brief span of just over a week, set against the colorful backdrop of a whirlwind trip, has its own special impact.

Millions, literally, who heard him on radio and television in Central America were exposed to that proclamation, that social message, in a way that the vast majority had never experienced before. Will it make any difference in their lives? Did it make any dent? It's impossible to know as yet, just as it's foolish to assert—because equally impossible to verify—that it didn't.

But reflect for a moment on how rapidly the social awareness of many other Christians has developed in the past two decades, impelled in no small part by such proclamations as the statements of Vatican II, the recent synods and papal encyclicals. It's reasonable to assume that many who heard the Pope in Central America had never heard that message, at least never so clearly. And for those more active Christians who had already made the gospel message of justice and peace a part of their lives, many of them must have been strengthened in their commitment.

Critique From London

That, of course, is not what most interests observers in this country. Or elsewhere. The London *Economist*, for instance, in its pre-trip issue (March 5) quite accurately described the political

and ecclesial situations the Pope would encounter and, while noting that the trip was fraught with danger, seemed to applaud the Pope's undertaking to do more or less what he in fact did do.

After the trip, however, the *Economist* felt constrained to ask, "Should the Pope have gone to Central America?" suggesting that the answer is probably "no." "The trouble is that he had nothing constructive to offer in the way of suggestions to stop the killing."

No Specific Plan

The Pope, that is, did not bring a new or specific peace plan for the region. Nor did he confront governments as forcefully or directly as some might have liked—though Haiti's Duvalier and Guatemala's Rios Montt and the Sandinista directorate and possibly Magana of El Salvador might have a different reading on that.

Commonweal noted that, "Of course, he didn't bring a ten-point peace plan in his suitcase—nor has he the divisions to enforce it. But there are other ways of building peace. Dominating John Paul's journey was the effort to maintain some open space amidst the terrible violence—to keep the church from falling back into accommodation with the oligarchies or from being co-opted by Marxist-Leninists; to maintain the church's rejection of both the injustice of 'pure economic capitalism' and the collectivism of one-party vanguards. It is important that the biggest crowds Central America has known came out not to celebrate any of the region's reigning hatreds, but to declare that fidelity to the Gospel was ultimate and that the Gospel will not provide social cement for any of the lockjawed options Central America is embattled over.

"Is this abstracted idealism or, as the *Economist* wrote, 'a helpless plea'? Or is it the consequence of hearing the voices of those caught in the middle and wanting, through liturgical gesture, through admonitions, through the very gathering

of crowds, to translate that 'sorrowful clamor' into a murmur of hope? We think the latter."

And so, basically, do I.

On the not unrelated question of Christianity and Marxism, the Pope took care to repeat (perhaps more insistently than some thought necessary) the church's well-developed and oft-expressed skepticism about the concrete historical expressions of Marxism. Skepticism is not the same as unrelenting hostility and is certainly not condemnation. The extreme expressions of state collectivization, as of unbridled free enterprise, are indeed condemned, as is also the ideology that has come to be called that of the national security state.

During the Central America trip, the Pope addressed those extremes without clearly saying that any had assumed full expression in any country of the region. His words to the church on these themes, both to the ministers of the church and to the faithful in general, were words of caution on the one hand to those who would push too fast and find themselves co-opted into systems inimical to their faith, and on the other hand, words of encouragement, even challenge, insisting that the Gospel message is the sufficiently revolutionary grounding on which to base the Christian's struggle for justice.

If anyone imagines that the Pope sought to pull the church back from active engagement in this continuous struggle, including engagement and dialogue with Marxists as well as non-Marxists, he or she hasn't read the words. Or noted how the *ensemble* of the Central American texts fits easily within the entire modern expression of the church's social-political viewpoint.

So, in terms of an overall, general impact, especially on the life of the church there, it was significant, positive and socially progressive. The texts will be cited for some time to come, not just as footnotes but as calls to action. ■

Verdict First, Trial After

Picture yourself on trial for criminal contempt of court for refusing to divulge information about a political organization suspected by the Federal Government of committing acts of violence. It could be the Communist Party, the Catholic Church, or your neighborhood PTA. Your position is that the Government is engaging in a political witch-hunt and you want no part in it.

Before the trial begins, even before the first prospective juror is questioned, the prosecutor puts an unusual request to the judge: He wants the names of the jurors kept secret so they can reach their verdict uninfluenced by the organization's "proven record of violent criminal conduct."

Your attorney protests the attempt to link you with the concept of violent retaliation, the clear insinuation that jurors hearing your case might need special protection. But the judge upholds the request, and the anonymous jury — to no one's great surprise — goes on to find you guilty.

A nightmare? Of course — and exactly what happened a few weeks ago in the courtroom of Federal District Judge Charles P. Sifton in Brooklyn, New York.

Twelve men and women identified only by numbers, ostensibly as protection against reprisal, found five defendants guilty of criminal contempt for refusing to testify before a Grand Jury investigating bombings for which the FALN, a Puerto Rican independence group, had claimed responsibility.

"We asked the jury to send a message to the FALN, and we think it did," bragged the prosecutor, James D. Harmon Jr. Indeed, the jury did. And in the process the jury and the prosecutor and Judge Sifton also sent a message to the public — that this one court, at least was willing to be the handmaiden of the prosecution in intimidating American citizens.

Grand Juries have long been prone to prosecutorial abuse . . . But what distin-

guishes this case from others was the Government's willingness to go beyond the Grand Jury and ensnare the court itself in its web of intimidation. And what makes that even more appalling is Judge Sifton's ready acquiescence.

The five defendants are appealing this misbegotten conviction by anonymous jurors. Here's hoping a higher court will put an end to these innovative abuses before they become widespread.

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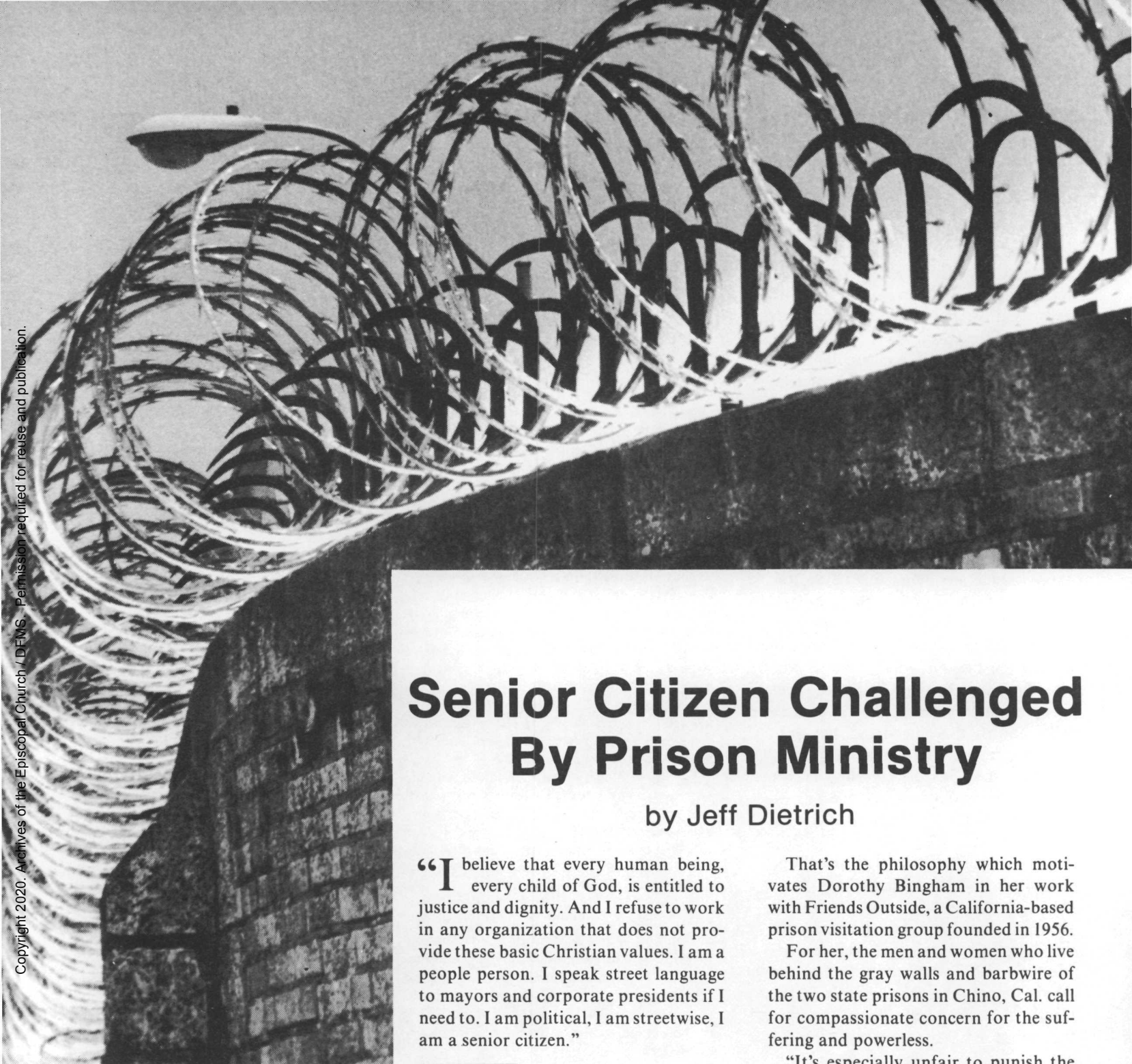
Sentencing Deferred

Sentencing of the five Hispanics convicted of criminal contempt for refusing to testify before a federal Grand Jury now appears postponed until the end of May or possibly mid-June. (See stories in March and April issues of THE WITNESS.)

The five were summoned to appear April 8 in a federal court in Brooklyn but Judge Charles P. Sifton dealt only with a motion by the defense for a new trial, which he denied, and "procedural matters."

As THE WITNESS went to press, pre-sentence investigations were underway, during which reports were being prepared by probation officers, defense attorneys and the Government. Probation officers will investigate the backgrounds and history of the defendants and attorneys will present evidence arguing for the leniency or severity of the sentence.

The Hispanics awaiting sentence include Maria Cueto, former director of the National Commission for Hispanic Affairs of the Episcopal Church, and Steven Guerra of the Board of Directors of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.



The Episcopal Urban Caucus at its Washington meeting recently called upon the national church to establish jail and prison ministries as a mission priority. Here is a story about one such.

Senior Citizen Challenged By Prison Ministry

by Jeff Dietrich

I believe that every human being, every child of God, is entitled to justice and dignity. And I refuse to work in any organization that does not provide these basic Christian values. I am a people person. I speak street language to mayors and corporate presidents if I need to. I am political, I am streetwise, I am a senior citizen."

Jeff Dietrich, a member of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker community, has served two sentences for peace demonstrations. His recent book, *Reluctant Resister*, chronicles the sentence he served for blocking the entrance of the Anaheim Convention Center during a military weapons exposition.

That's the philosophy which motivates Dorothy Bingham in her work with Friends Outside, a California-based prison visitation group founded in 1956.

For her, the men and women who live behind the gray walls and barbwire of the two state prisons in Chino, Cal. call for compassionate concern for the suffering and powerless.

"It's especially unfair to punish the inmate's family," says Bingham. "The Center does a little bit of everything from child care to welfare counseling. We try to be a loving family or friend for those who need help."

But the primary motivation is to

provide simple hospitality.

"Before we opened there were 10,000 visits a month, and there was no one except a single state employee at the gate to deal with all the traffic and answer questions. There was no place to get in out of the rain or heat or change a diaper or warm a bottle. So the need was there."

An example of the hospitality provided involves the case of a young pregnant woman coming to visit her husband. "She had a miscarriage at the bus station," says Bingham. "Friends Outside volunteers rushed her to the hospital and saw to it that she received immediate medical attention. That night they put her up in a motel. The next morning, through their contacts with prison officials, Friends Outside arranged the extraordinary privilege of an unscheduled visit."

Perhaps the work of Friends Outside can best be described as that of humanizing an otherwise cold and sterile institution. "We're just here to act as compassionately as we can," says Bingham. "Of course it is difficult to feel compassion for others unless we can feel their pain and suffering."

Many friends think that Bingham's interest in social justice and concern for those who suffer dates back to 1947 when she and her husband Clyde were forced to move from their family home in Arkansas. Their home was destroyed by a tornado leaving them penniless and dependent upon the charity of others. The couple learned the meaning of suffering, and for the last 40 years countless individuals have been the beneficiaries of that harsh lesson.

Bingham speaks with the conviction and firm resolve of one who has dedicated her life to the service of others, but she hardly looks the part of a "dogooder." With her freshly coiffed silver hair, and dressed in a green pants suit, she looks more like the archetypical grandmother than a social agitator.



Dorothy Bingham

Perhaps that is why she is so effective. Her personal charm and unassuming demeanor are disarming to any political adversary.

At 67 Dorothy Bingham has been retired since 1975, having spent 37 years as a factory worker at the G.E. plant in Ontario, Cal. At a time when most senior citizens are contemplating a well-deserved rest, Dorothy "probably averages more than a 40-hour week" serving on the board of directors of the Inland Urban League, Church Women United, National Conference of Christians and Jews, the United Way, to name just a few.

"I've often wondered why I can't sit down and leave things alone. But I can't. I think Jesus set the example. You almost have to be in politics to do the things that he wants us to do.

"I got involved with prison ministry in 1960 through Chaplain Harry Howard. They were locking up so many young boys for marijuana back then, and the chaplain began to wonder if these youths might not be able to relate to older church women. He invited us to participate in the Yoke Fellow Movement. You know, by lifting the yoke off our fellow human beings."

Dorothy worked for eight years as a volunteer in the Youth Authority Camp. "I don't think I taught the young men very much, but I sure learned a lot about the criminal justice system, and

the institutions.

"When I first started visiting at the men's prison, I was very afraid, and had to have an escort. But now I have no fear because what I see is just a human being like I see out on the streets. I feel as safe on the inside of the prison walls as I do on the outside."

Bingham knows from firsthand experience that fear "keeps church people away" from prison ministry. "Our fear keeps us comfortable in the pew. But I can read Matthew 25 just like anyone else; and I know that it calls us to visit the imprisoned just as surely as it calls us to feed the hungry and visit the sick, which are comfortable things for Christians to do. But it is very hard for church people to put themselves into the scene where people are in prison.

"The church can make an impact by first getting rid of the fallacy that everyone in prison belongs there." With unemployment at a record high, Dorothy feels that the prison system has become a dumping ground for the nation's unemployed minorities. She quotes the head of the Texas prison system who told the state legislature, "All the prisons in Texas could be closed and there wouldn't be an increase in crime."

"People who get involved in crime the first time should not go to prison. We need to have a community setting which is nurturing and supportive, and, of course, it is the church community that comes to mind first." But before such a vision can be achieved it is necessary to awaken to certain harsh realities. One, Bingham claims, is that "People in prison do not get educated or rehabilitated. There should be job training. There should be some process to get people ready for the outside."

Another harsh reality is that "Taxpayers are willing to pay vast sums of money for prisons but nothing for prevention of the social factors that cause crime. Here at the California Institute for Men, we have only 3,400 inmates

Macho Money

With the provocative title, "Real Men Don't Earn Less Than Their Wives," an article in *Psychology Today*, (11/82), reports on a recent economic change in American society. An increasing number of high-achieving women are earning more than their husbands, and some husbands find that hard to take. Research indicates that in that situation, sex lives may suffer, and mutual psychological and physical abuse is higher, which promotes a higher rate of divorce. In fact, for some husbands premature death from heart disease is eleven times more frequent than normal.

The article continues, "Though it has always been a dirty little secret, money often means power in marriage as well as in society at large. And as the provider, the husband has traditionally held the greater share of family power. Beyond the domestic control that accompanies their monetary contribution, many men measure their masculinity by the size of their paycheck. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that some husbands feel threatened when their wives earn more."

One concludes that something other than the spirit of Ephesians 5:25-30 is at work here.

— *Daughters of Sarah*, Jan./Feb. 1983

and yet there are 1,100 state employees. That's a three-to-one ratio. If we had that kind of student-teacher ratio in the first place, the prison population would be significantly reduced."

Until some of these visionary ideas are implemented, however, Bingham and Friends Outside are committed to struggling with a less than ideal situation. And perhaps that is the most difficult task for social activists like Dorothy Bingham: accepting that real life situations are never black or white, good or evil. "The Chino Friends Outside chapter is different from other Friends Outside chapters," says Bingham. "We knew we could not do what had to be done without the help of the prison officials because there are

just too many rules and regulations. But inside the institution there are officials who are good Christian people who have helped us immensely. This is a new concept in cooperation between Friends Outside and the institution. We do not have an 'us against them' relationship."

Bingham's refusal to stereotype even those who might with some justification be considered adversaries is a quality that has served her well in her many community activities, but it is not a trait that came naturally. It grew out of her Christian willingness to love her enemies as herself and a painful process of maturation. "I was a union steward at G.E., so I thought everyone who worked for a corporation had little horns. Then I began attending board meetings of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and I had to start taking another look at these executives who worked a full day and then volunteered free evenings for community service. No one made them do it. They were there for the same reason as I, to make the world a better place. So I had to change my value system."

That change was underscored most dramatically in the winter of 1981 when then Governor Jerry Brown appointed Dorothy Bingham as his representative to the White House Commission on Aging. "I almost lost my religion and my positive outlook," says Bingham of the experience. The White House apparently had prearranged the conference to reflect a biased perspective of senior citizens. She credits people like Sen. John Heinz of Pennsylvania and William Kieschnick, president of Atlantic Richfield Corporation, with salvaging the conference.

Often the people who are chosen to participate in such policy-making events reflect only the outlook of the middle and upper classes. But Dorothy brings the unique perspective of a factory worker, a union activist, senior citizen, and a woman to top level con-

ferences and boardrooms. "The problem with these groups is that they reflect the attitudes of people who have had everything given to them. They just can't understand people who have had to fight for everything they have. People who work for hourly wages must be represented on policy-making groups. I think the only way we're going to make things better is to change the laws."

Recently the Inland Urban League presented Dorothy with its first award to acknowledge and recognize the special support she had given the Urban League and the community at large.

With all of her activities Dorothy admits that her husband has learned to accept an occasional peanut butter sandwich for dinner. "I am all for it," says Clyde, who works as a volunteer with Dorothy in the Urban League and Friends Outside. "If we don't start helping each other, this country is going to go down the drain."

Resources

The Rev. Canon Edward W. Rodman, One Joy Street, Boston, MA 02108 will offer strategies and suggestions on how to start a prison ministry. Canon Rodman is missionary to minority communities for the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. Telephone toll-free 1-800-392-6079.

American Friends Service Committee has a Prison Visitation and Support Program dealing specifically with federal and military prisons. Eric Corson, AFSC, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19102.

Institute of Women Today, sponsored by Protestant, Catholic and Jewish organizations, brings service programs to women in prison as one of its projects. Institute of Women Today, 1307 S. Wabash, Chicago, Ill. 60605.

Instead of Prisons: A Handbook for Abolitionists, by Fay Honey Knopp and Jon Regler. Furnishes a framework and ideology by which current prison work can be evaluated and future work planned; proposes concrete tasks. \$7.25. Safer Society Press, 3049 E. Genesee St., Syracuse, N.Y. 13224.

Happy Mother's Day

Mothers are important in America; on the second Sunday of May they are feted with flowers and candy as children old and young remember Mom.

Pastors prepare sermons on the values of motherhood for services to which we wear red or white carnations, and every state selects its Mother of the Year.

In the state of Washington lives a young mother of two who is dying of cancer; Struggling to exist on Social Security benefits of \$365 monthly for herself and her daughter with rent at \$250, she receives too much to be eligible for Medicaid, and cannot pay hospital bills of more than \$6,000 for emergency care.

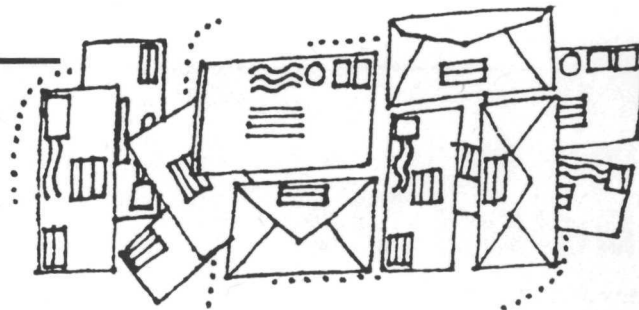
So she must give up her two little children who keep asking if Mommie is dead yet.

The President proposes to spend \$200 billion on armaments — the biggest peacetime military budget in history — but says we can't afford the funds needed to help a young mother who is dying on Mother's Day.

—Mary Jane Brewster

CREDITS

Cover, Beth Seka, adapted from graphic by Margaret Longdon; graphics p. 4, 8, Margaret Longdon; graphic p. 11, Rini Templeton; graphic p. 14, Institute for Women Today; cartoon p. 18, Doug Brunner.



To George, With Love

I am forwarding this Open Letter to George Herbert in response to Anne Fowler's poem, "To George Herbert at the 10 O'clock Service," in the February WITNESS:

Dear George,

I hope you don't mind the informality of first names. I have had a love affair with your poetry for these many years, and I think of you as a colleague — a fellow Priest and Poet, although I may have lost what little humility I have in making a comparison like that.

I am writing you because, seeing through a glass darkly, I don't know what magazines are read in heaven, and maybe (although I hope I am wrong) THE WITNESS doesn't have a distributor in the Celestial City.

In a recent issue of THE WITNESS there was a poem about you or to you (I wasn't sure which, and it probably doesn't matter). In the poem, the author said, "I am, like George (she refers to you by first name, too) one of God's frozen chosen."

While you, George, may like the tingly rhyme of "frozen chosen," you may be wondering what it means. Well, some years ago, a certain wag, who shall be nameless, said that Episcopalians (the remnant of the Church of England in the Colonies, following the War of Independence, a little more than a century following your untimely death) were God's frozen people. It is not completely clear what the wag meant, but I think it has something to do with Episcopalians mumbling the Amens at the end of collects or voting in vestry meetings against bulk subscriptions to THE WITNESS or refusing to contribute food

and clothing to those who went on Peace Marches in the 1960s.

But, dear George, please be assured the wag did not mean to infer you were frozen. I blush to say it, but the wag may not even have read your poetry. Not all Episcopalians (to their shame) have. And, I am sure the author of the poem never meant to imply that you were or are frozen. She probably agrees with me that you are one of the most free persons who ever lived. When, some years ago, I read your poem, "Redemption," I also became free. I hope to see you face-to-face one day.

Lew Towler
E. Lansing, Mich.

Ms. Fowler Responds

Thanks to Lew Towler for sharing that marvelous letter. My reply? Recently I wrote in a poem entitled, "Resume":

Under Education:

I am the only person I have ever known
Who was utterly happy
While writing a doctoral dissertation.
I was in love with George Herbert.

Under Research Interest:

Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart
Could have recover'd greenness?

Without George Herbert I question whether I would be, today, a churchgoer, a theological student, a poet, a Christian. Someday, thanks to him, I may become a priest of the church.

Of course he was not frozen. But he has written eloquently of paralysis, and I have known that, too. If my debt to him is so great that I can only speak of it in irony and paradox, I must hope that he will understand.

Anne C. Fowler
Belmont, Mass.

Making Do

It became a game, making do.

A pair of sorry shoes you previously would have discarded you suddenly conclude really don't look that bad. They will last, you decide, maybe another year or two. You are making do.

You quickly reach the same opinion about a battered parka. After all, you murmur, it's thick and warm and not a single button is missing. You are making do.

You have a tooth that needs filling. You thank the Lord that it's located in the back where no one can see it and you eat on the other side of your mouth. You are making do.

You stop buying fruit, it's just so dear. You console your anxiety about the children's diet by telling yourself again and again that there's oodles of vitamin C in the rest of the food they eat. You are making do.

You pack your husband peanut butter sandwiches and he bravely makes light that lunchtime at work makes him feel he's a kid eating in the school cafeteria again. He insists he doesn't miss the taste of meat, that peanut butter is delicious. You are making do.

Cold water in the fridge replaces the costly soft drinks that formerly quenched the family's thirst. You tell your teenagers water is much better for their complexion and they smile and nod that water really is healthier. They are being courageously cooperative. You are making do.

You notice a stray canine with the cutest button nose. You would like to take him home. From the look in his brown eyes he wants you to. But you can't; what's there to feed the poor little guy? You turn away, fighting tears and leave the pup whimpering. Times are like that — they're forcing you to do unkind things. You are making do.

You add fringe to your children's too-short jeans. You stop buying hair conditioner, pretty stationery, plant food, your favorite magazine, knickknacks for

by Gail Habbyslaw

your daughter to add to her collection. You don't go to the movies anymore. You stop inviting relatives to dinner. You hear yourself telling your offspring having no money doesn't render you poor, that poverty is a state of mind. Feel rich, you preach to the children, because you are rich with your health, supportive brothers and sisters, loving parents, a roof over your heads, food to eat, clothes to wear. Think, you solemnly add, how much worse it would be if we lived in, say, India, or Pakistan. And your teenagers — seeing how badly you are feeling — cheerfully smile, nodding in agreement at everything you mutter. You are making do.

All of these sacrifices, and more, are part of the rules, part of the high risk stakes, in the game of making do. The prize for winning is well worth the effort: it's called, simply, survival.

This is a game where there can't be any losers. You just have to make do. Or else.

— Reprinted with permission from the 12th issue of the *Mill Hunk Herald*, Pittsburgh's Democratically Run Press.



Inflation is placing many items out of reach for the average person.

Gail Habbyslaw of Mercer, Pa., is a 1980 graduate of Westminster College who is presently unemployed.

Letters . . . Continued from page 2

They have claimed to know what we want, what we think, and how we feel. They have claimed to know what is best for the Indian.

Another possibility is that the Indian people were simply overlooked. Perhaps their absence can be chalked up to an honest mistake, an omission that was unintentional. If this is the case, then the hard question becomes: What does that honest mistake have to say about the seriousness and respect accorded to the Indian people of this church?

It has been the practice, and even the policy, of this society to try to forget about the Indian. The American conscience has a terrible hangover from the long night of its brutalization of the Indian people. It does not want to remember. It has a vested interest in forgetting. And so it wills us to vanish, to disappear, to remain quaint curiosities in a history long since past. Occasionally, if the script calls for it, if it's Thanksgiving, we may be brought out to decorate the set, but it is far more convenient to ignore the Indian people rather than to confront them. The argument that native people were neglected just as an oversight becomes a clear signal to our community that we are still America's bad dream. It never really happened. And even if it did, that was a long, long time ago.

There is a certain *deja vu* in writing

this type of letter. I have the distinct impression that I've been here before. Writing to magazines and newspapers, raising my hand at church meetings and conferences, tugging on the sleeve of the host, and always asking over and over: "But where are the native people?" I didn't see us in your article; I didn't hear us at your podium; I didn't receive your invitation.

And there is always a *deja vu* about the replies I receive: "Don't worry, we're talking about your issues too," or, "We're sorry, we just forgot to add you to the list."

I suppose this sense of frustration is part of the job description of being an Indian. More than likely I will have to go on writing letters, raising my hand, and interrupting the otherwise smooth flow of business as usual. I do regret having to do this with *THE WITNESS*, but I hope you will understand why I felt it was important.

**The Rev. Steve Charleston
Mobridge, S.D.**

(THE WITNESS stands chided and sobered by Steve Charleston's sensitively written letter. For the February PB feature, we approached groups with whom we have had an ongoing contact in the past, in a way we have not, unfortunately, had with Native Americans. We are taking steps to put us in closer touch with the Native American constituency. — Eds.)

Editorial . . . continued from page 3
predicate and subject. Both were interfering — but with divine authority behind them.

In the United States we have sought to preserve that principle of allowing all people the opportunity for discerning the signs of the times. We call it our democratic process. There are other ways, but we have found this serves us well. So may the Catholic bishops continue to urge upon us the perils of a policy of nuclear war. May the World Council of Churches persevere in its resistance to the apartheid policy of South Africa. May the National Council of Churches strengthen its efforts to identify and minister to the faces of oppression in this country.

May every last one of us, who feels called to do so, continue to speak out as loudly and as clearly and as truthfully as possible on the issues of right and wrong, of justice and tyranny, of peace and war. Our collective redemption requires nothing less. Only in so doing dare we invoke the name of God on our affairs. Even in so doing we must await in humility the divine judgment.

(R.L.D. and the editors)

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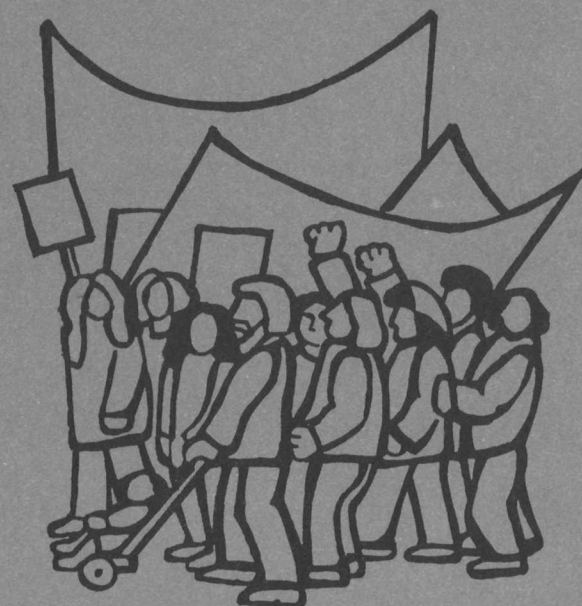
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