

# THE WITNESS

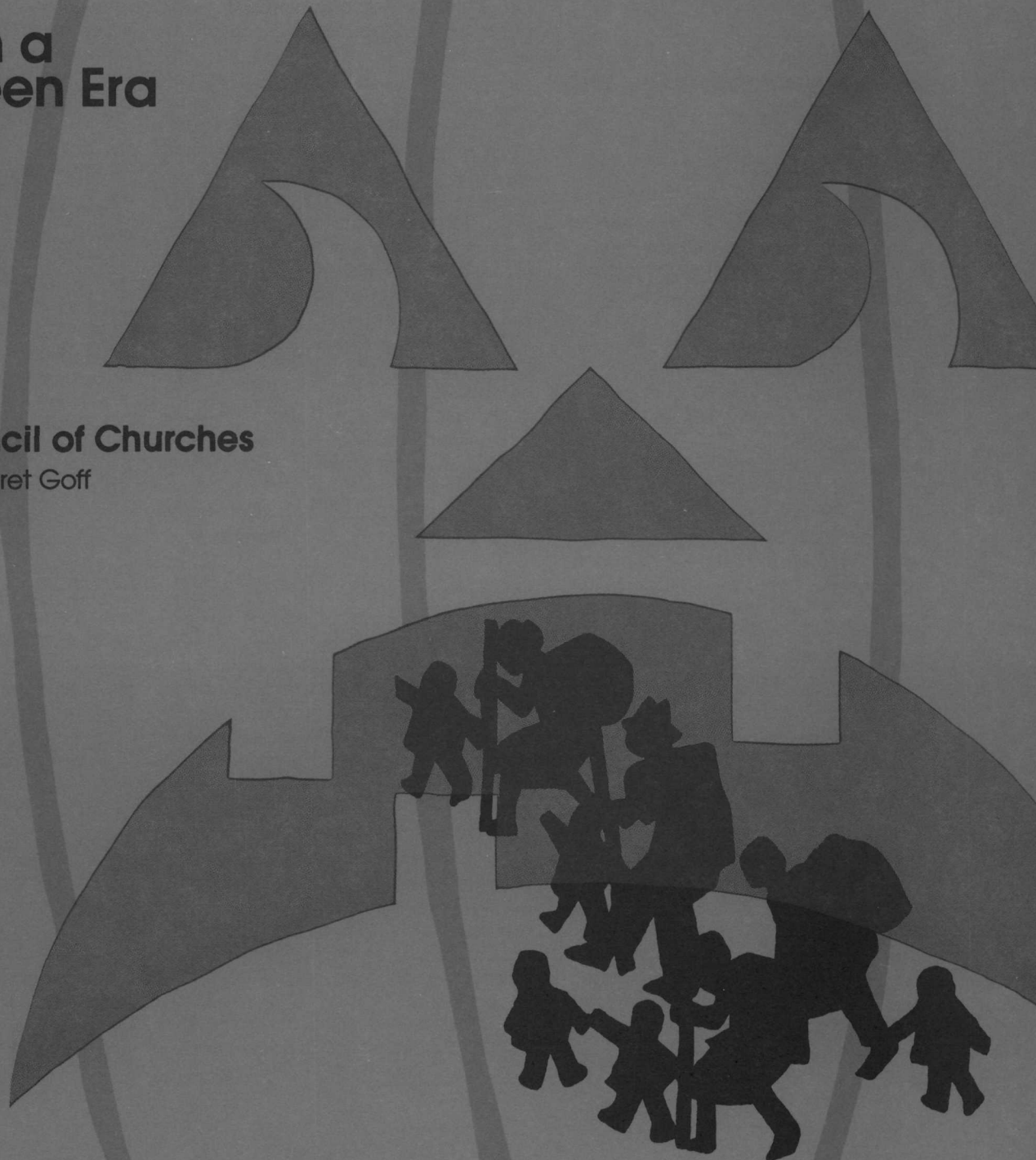
VOL. 66 NO. 10 OCTOBER 1983

## Living in a Halloween Era

Robert L. DeWitt

## World Council of Churches

James & Margaret Goff  
Mary Lou Suhor  
Dorothee Solle



# LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

## Lauds August Issue

In moving from the National Church Staff to the Staff of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, I was pleased to receive a familiar publication — THE WITNESS. I especially enjoyed and found quite informative, the August Issue.

"The Quiet Death of Black Colleges" by Manning Marable was extremely helpful to me in analyzing what is happening to Black colleges, but at the same time it is alarming and frightening. Mo Kenyatta's "How I Became a 60's Activist" was excellent reading in conjunction with Jim Wallis' "Growing Up White in Detroit" (*Sojourners*).

More importantly, it is good to have at least one Episcopal publication which stays with issues many would just as soon forget.

**The Rev. Franklin D. Turner, D.D.**  
Assistant to the Bishop  
for Congregations  
Philadelphia, Pa.

## Crew Pulls No Punches

Hooray for Louie Crew! His article in the August WITNESS pulls no punches. It's about time. I am so desperately ashamed, angry, despairing of the church's attitude towards gay and lesbian people. It seems to me totally un-Jesus-like. There must be countless Episcopal churches in America served by gay or lesbian priests, often with big buildings and dwindling congregations,

who could offer a *real* ministry to this suffering minority, if only they were allowed out of the closet.

You have to go through the closet if you want to reach Narnia and the bishops must lead their children in this journey. They have the key, and the moment is now. In the light of the AIDS epidemic, serious Christians can no longer "pass by on the other side." Gay people need not only oil and wine poured on their wounds, but most of all, compassion.

I am currently performing a beautiful one woman play on the life of Julian of Norwich, to be published by Seabury Press in the winter. It is written by Jim Janda, a gay priest and poet, who has had his share of suffering at the hands of an uncompassionate church. Julian's vision of a Jesus who is mother, lover, maid to all his children, seems to have particular appeal to suffering and oppressed people. She lived through an apocalyptic age very much like our own. Yet, through all this, Julian saw only God's love.

This life, this world, this church must hold in its embrace all our brothers and sisters, regardless of sexual orientation — in embrace, not in mere affirmation.

**Roberta Nobleman**  
Dumont, N.J.

## Gay Analysis Trenchant

I was thrilled to read Louie Crew's article in the August WITNESS, "View from a Gay Person's Pew." Particularly pleasing was his trenchant analysis of the Episcopal Church's "religious word-wizardry" when most bishops and others speak of "ministering" to "Children of God" (gays/lesbians and other outcasts).

I am a seminarian at Episcopal Divinity School and can't spend much, but I would like to have a few copies to give to gay brothers and sisters who can be refreshed and made more bold by Crew's *integrity*, and non-gay brothers and sisters who can benefit from his honesty.

Thank you and your colleagues (including Coleman McGehee, my bishop;

and Sue Hiatt and Barbara Harris) for your excellent publication and the support you give continually to those who are gay, and brothers and sisters who are set apart (or aside) by other labels.

As Children of God (or cogs) we are often asked to keep the mechanism (church) working even as we are denied our personhood. I, for one, am opting for helping to operate the gears rather than letting them operate on me. I believe that's what God, whose child I am, expects faithful people to do.

**Robert H. Gorsline**  
Cambridge, Mass.

## Invites Dialogue on Haiti

Thank you for Bishop Walter Dennis' article, "Poverty, Surveillance - Haiti's Daily Lot," in the July WITNESS.

I am administratively responsible for the work of my Communion in Haiti and have visited on several occasions. I concur with his observations as stated in the article. I, too, am grateful for the opportunity to see for myself what the people of Haiti are up against and I'm delighted to be involved with those who are "unashamedly being about the Lord's work."

I shall not only unite with Bishop Dennis in prayer for the brave and patient people of Haiti, but I would invite the opportunity for dialogue on possible united efforts to contribute toward the "wholeness, dignity, freedom, and sufficiency" which I believe to be God's will for all people.

**Donald E. Williams**  
Missionary Board  
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Anderson, In.

## Nicaragua Welcomes

Christians from throughout the world visit Nicaragua in Central America. Many of them are members of the Episcopal Church. A few contact the local Episcopal (Anglican) Church of Nicaragua. Unfortunately many others, being unaware of a local church of the Anglican Communion, miss out on that

opportunity.

Visitors are invited to contact the Episcopal Church of Nicaragua (a diocese of The Episcopal Church, U.S.A.). Through the Anglican institute they can be given a brief orientation of the role being played by the local branch of the Anglican Church in Nicaragua's process of reconstruction. The telephone number in Managua is 2-5174. Correspondence should be addressed to Apartado 1207, Managua, Nicaragua. The Episcopal Church of Nicaragua welcomes you.

**The Rev. Robert W. Renouf, Director**  
**Instituto Anglicano de Nicaragua**

## Request From Prison

I am writing to you from the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility where I am now incarcerated.

Recently I was given a copy of THE WITNESS magazine which I enjoyed reading. THE WITNESS is a contemporary commentary of the Gospel applied to modern times.

My purpose for contacting you is to respectfully request that my name be placed on your subscription mailing list. Unfortunately I have no family or funds to pay for the subscription. It is my hope that you could extend to me the charity of a free subscription.

**Name Withheld**  
**Los Lunas, N.M.**

*(It is THE WITNESS' policy to send a free 1-year subscription to anyone in prison, upon request. — Eds.)*

## Limousine Liberalism?

Every issue of your magazine infuriates me. There is no balance in your editorial policy. THE WITNESS is a very good example of "Limousine Liberalism." There is much negative information promulgated in THE WITNESS.

Also, I do not believe in abortion. I do not support civil disobedience in any way. I believe in Jesus. He said, "I have come to give you life." THE WITNESS needs to get closer to God's plan.

**Richard G. Antle**  
**FPO San Francisco, Cal.**

## Faith Strong in Russia

I would like to express my appreciation for THE WITNESS. Indeed I am delighted to see it as an expression of Episcopal faith in the peace movement.

In particular, I was most pleased to read the article in June by Dr. Susan B. Anthony on her visit to the Russian Orthodox Church, especially because I had made the same tour of the seminaries of that church this Spring with the Trinity Church Tour. We always ended by talking "peace." Perhaps the faith of the church will prevail over the forces of power. In Russia that faith is very strong and I am happy to support what is positive and just in the Soviet Union.

**Helen Bailey**  
**World Peacemakers**  
**New Vernon, N.J.**

## Background for Travelers

We would like permission to give copies of Dr. Susan B. Anthony's article about the Soviet Union to interested participants in travel programs arranged by Citizen Exchange Council. It will give them some background on the state of religious worship in contemporary Soviet society.

**Andrea Sengstacken**  
**Program Coordinator**  
**New York, N.Y.**

## Fashionable Church?

Henry H. Rightor's article, "Can Law and Religion Find a Better Relationship?" (June WITNESS) is a typical example of the belief that "it is all right for liberals to try to influence government, but it is wrong for conservatives." I certainly don't agree with the Moral Majority, but I think they have as much right as liberals.

There was a good editorial, "Why We Oppose the Death Penalty," in the same issue. If it is all right to oppose the death penalty, why is it wrong to oppose abortion? Aren't both attempts to legislate morality? I oppose the death penalty and abortion. I disagree with the Moral Majority because I am especially opposed to the mega-abortion of nuclear proliferation and pesticides. Most Moral Majority types see nothing wrong with these things. Yet I still think they have a right to disagree with me. I belong to Prolifers for Survival which opposes both surgical abortion and nuclear abortion.

I oppose the "squeal law" which makes clinics tell parents when their teenagers receive contraceptives. My friends could tell you how I crusaded against North Carolina's law like that years ago. But if I crusade against it, why shouldn't the Moral Majority have a right

*Continued on page 23*

**Archbishop Makary of Kiev found Dr. Susan B. Anthony's WITNESS interview with him in his mail at the World Council of Churches meeting in Vancouver. He shared it with his colleagues, Archpriest Lev Makhno, representative of the patriarch of Moscow in New York, left; and Priest Sergel Kieselev, Russian Orthodox delegate, right. He told THE WITNESS, "Such articles build mutual understanding."**





## Living in a Halloween Era

by Robert L. DeWitt

**H**alloween (All Hallows Even) comes to us with the sanctity of Christian interpretation, especially in association with the following day, All Saints Day — a commemoration of centuries' standing in the church. But its roots go deeper. The ancient Celts, shivering in fear as they faced a mysterious and threatening world, ages ago on October 31 observed a ritual marked by bonfires, exotic garb, dances and rituals to placate and to protect them from the evil spirits which lurked frighteningly on the fringes of life.

The jack-o-lanterns, witch costumes and unearthly masks to be seen on Halloween today are a direct derivative of that ancient fear, howsoever playful it may have become. Ask any 4 or 5-year-old. Or perhaps *you* remember. Ghosts and ghouls are scary. But Halloween comes only once a year.

Or does it?

There is a tone abroad today, an anxiety clutching at millions, at which those Celtic forerunners would nod knowingly. Those Celtic precursors felt the same sinister significance in their time as we in

ours, for we live in a Halloween era.

For example, there is the persistent American phobia about communism. And it is sufficiently widespread not only to have made possible the Reagan administration, but also to allow that administration to mortgage the nation's financial future by an obsession with stockpiling military strategies and armaments beyond any reason. Adequate defense preparation against communist or other intruders? This is clearly an arguable position. But to engage in overt and covert strategems to prevent a given nation from "going communist"? If any form of government can function effectively to promote the general welfare of its people, one would expect that, in all humility, we would watch carefully, hoping some leaves from their notebook might fit ours. We could use a few. Many nations have been glad in the past to profit from our experiments in government. Have we as a nation lost our capacity to learn from others?

But there is not just the phobia about communism. So it is also



with our fears of alternate lifestyles, sexual preference, atheism, and a host of other apprehensions.

A people who feel threatened by hobgoblins, witches and ghosts are not well situated to make rational, constructive decisions. They are too busy reacting with fear to act with reason. It is as though someone sighting a floating log off-shore at a summer beach were to shout, "Shark!". And droves of people (thanks to *Jaws*) would dash for their cars with their children and drive recklessly home through holiday traffic, forgetting to fasten their seat belts. They would be driven by a figment of their fear into a real and present danger of their own making.

How do we hallow — the word means "offer to God" — an "evening" such as the era in which we live? October 31, as well as the Halloween of fright which is our era, are sacred. And therefore perhaps our most important responsibility — and response — is to learn what to fear, to recognize the real dangers and not be stampeded by fantasies. There are enough genuine threats to

challenge us. We cannot afford the time and energy to trifle with imaginary ones.

The things that hurt *people*, these are the real threats to a hallowed creation. Unemployment and its child, poverty, hurt people. Radiation and other environmental pollutants not only hurt people but threaten them with extinction. Inferior education, being de-barred from participating in decision-making on issues that affect these hurts, are threats to people's very personhood. Discrimination based on race, sex or sexual orientation, creed or class not only hurts people, but is an affront to God's creation.

Anxiety sees a threat as diffused, out of focus, and so it reacts neurotically, irrationally, ineffectively. Fear has the threat in focus, and reacts to the best of its ability, with effective judgment. One of the basic ways to hallow our time is to learn what really to fear. For fear of the Lord, says scripture (*Psalms 111*), is the beginning of wisdom. And who could fear God without fearing those real things which threaten the people of God? ■

## THE WITNESS

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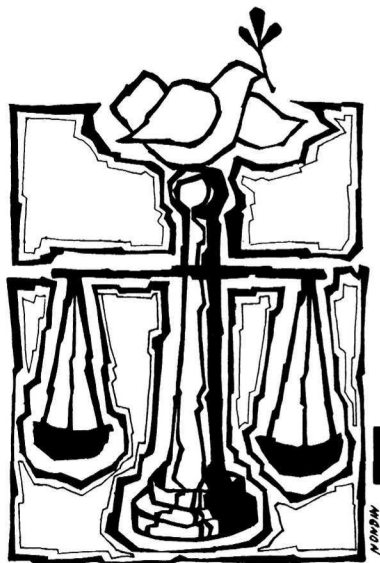
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World Council of Churches

# **'No Peace Without Justice'** **Recurring Theme at Vancouver**

by Mary Lou Suhor

**H**heavy sighs and audible protests surged from the weary press corps who had covered the 18-day meeting of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver. WCC delegates had just voted for an extra evening session Aug. 10 to debate several controversial documents. "I'm beginning to think I live here," said one veteran reporter, racing off for yet another sandwich-dinner.

That was hardly the last challenge. After the final gavel and the folding of the huge tent housing liturgies, reporters on interpretive assignments carried home notebooks full of convention actions, highlights, reports, plus daily press releases issued by a superb team of WCC information officers. How put it all together?

The meeting of more than 800 delegates from 301 churches representing 400 million people had suggested the label, "Church United Nations," and the less complimentary, "Church World's Fair." One thing was certain at the end: The World Council had pursued its own agenda, unruffled by critics such as Carl McIntire and Ian Paisley

who showed up on the premises to sound the old *Reader's-Digest-was-right* theme and red-bait.

If there was a recurring theme, it was grounded in the belief of the delegates that there can be no peace without justice, nor can evangelism and action for peace and justice be separated.

## **Undergirding Theology**

No doubt, the daily worship informing the deliberations bound the delegates in spirit and purpose. "This cannot be engineered," said General Secretary Philip Potter. "It happened. This is a praying assembly and worship is central. We had a deep sense of the church from different cultures, able to celebrate faith in Christ at a time when everything in the world points to the contrary."

Moreover, creatively undertaken, the services revealed that prayer can be an aesthetic, and nurturing experience. Said Pauline Webb, British religious broadcaster, "I wonder what worship is going to seem like back home after the splendor of each day's beginning here."

Early on, theology proved both focal

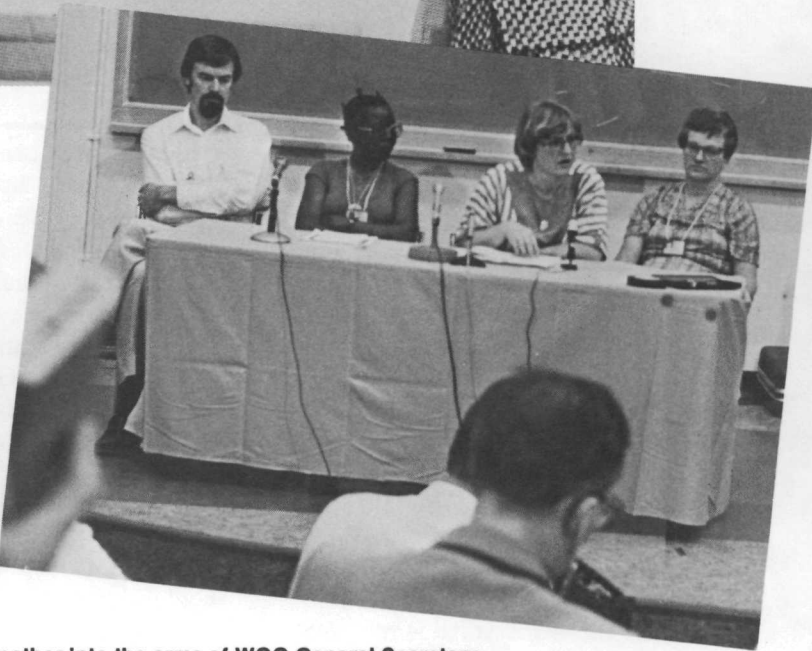
point and catalyst as WCC broke new ground toward its goal of becoming an overarching ecumenical body accepted by all Christendom — a phenomenon which has not existed since 787 A.D.

This advance was accomplished largely through the promulgation of the Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry Document (BEM) sent to the churches after a 1982 meeting of the WCC Faith and Order Commission in Lima, Peru. The "promising scaffolding" has been worked on by more than 100 theologians representing all branches of the Christian faith, including Roman Catholics, whose bishops are being asked for the first time to accept a doctrinal document that did not originate with Rome.

Timetable for the response to the BEM document suggests that by the end of 1984, churches give brief progress reports on their discussion of the text, which spells out areas of convergence on three traditionally divisive doctrinal areas. Official responses will be solicited around 1987-88, when a World Conference on Faith and Order is projected



Photo by Peter Williams



Top photo: An African child was placed by its mother into the arms of WCC General Secretary Philip A. Potter when he called for symbols of life during worship services opening the WCC's sixth assembly. Bottom, left: Relaxing after a panel on "Women and Racism" at The Well, Women's Center, are from left, Gloria George, Musqueam law student, who headed up native participation for the WCC Assembly; Annette Hutchins-Felder, director, Women and African Development Program, African American Institute; and Lindiwe Myeza, director of an Institute for Women's Studies and Research in South Africa. Right, Baerbel von Wartenburg, director of the WCC sub-unit, Community of Women and Men in the Church, responds to a question at a press backgrounder. Other panellists were from left, Michael Kinnamon of the Faith and Order Commission, Sitembiso Nyoni, of Zimbabwe, and Jean Skuse, vice-moderator of the WCC Central Committee.



which would include not only WCC members but non-members as well. It would be "the broadest ecumenical forum in Christendom," and exhibit the churches' concern for the unity of the whole human family.

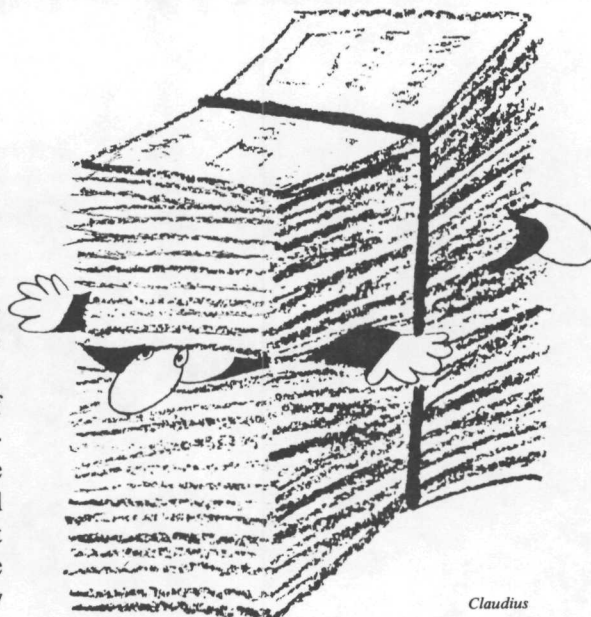
Dr. Paul Crow, U.S. Disciples ecumenical officer and major drafter of the "Steps Toward Unity" statement, said that in the years ahead, the meaning of "a common understanding of the apostolic faith" needs to be clarified. "We don't need one definition or sentence all can agree on. But we will have to look at how diverse historic formulations have proclaimed the same faith to see how these can be brought together."

Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie said the BEM Document will be helpful in "picking up the pieces" of English Church Union efforts, and "can get us around the table again."

The new Lima liturgy celebrated in Vancouver reflected the relationship of doctrine and liturgy, and was embraced by many as "the official Eucharist of ecumenical gatherings." (But Roman Catholics and Orthodox did not receive Communion.)

Thorny points of departure remain among WCC denominations themselves, and between WCC and the Roman Catholics: Episcopal and non-Episcopal ministry, the Eucharist, tensions between those concerned with unity and those with justice issues, and of course, women's ordination. Illustrative of the latter was a bit of WCC graffiti surfaced by a Canadian journalist: "If the Archbishop of Canterbury had made the same statement about Blacks that he made about women, (e.g., women could be ordained, but not now) he would never have been allowed to celebrate the Lima liturgy here."

In contrast to this cumbersome BEM process, liberation theology, which does not wait for documents to be handed down by theologians, was "lived" by those practicing action/reflection



Claudius

### WCC Paper Weights

More than 14 tons of paper were used to report the WCC meeting in Vancouver. Five tons provide just over a million sheets; thus, three million sheets passed through participants' hands. The typing pool used more than 10,000 sheets of paper, all originals from which the 4,500 copies in five languages were made.

throughout the conference. One manifestation was a liturgy which sprang spontaneously from U.S. and Central American delegates. Following a biblical reflection, some 300 people signed a covenant of peace amidst a shower of rose petals and Latin music.

Assisting in planning were Julia Esquivel, of Guatemala; Andrew Shogreen, Nicaragua; and Marta Benavides, El Salvador; and Marilyn Moore, Dwain Epps, and Alfonso Roman of the United States.

The WCC also went on record for theological education for the "whole people of God," not just clergy, in its "Learning in Community" document. If implemented, said Mercy Oduyoye of Nigeria, "it would have something close to a revolutionary effect."

"Theology is a reflection on faith in God and its implications, including lifestyle, decision-making, equipping for action in society, and relationship with God and persons," according to the

report. It says that theological education must link action and reflection, experience and tradition, the personal and the corporate, the local and the global. The report's focus on family education proved controversial, asking the church to enlarge its concept of family to include one-parent families and separated families. One Orthodox delegate said, "I can't find that in the Gospel."

Responding, Ms. Oduyoye said, "The Christian concept of the family is not, in reality, that of the family in which a lot of people live. There are other types beside father, mother and four and a half children, and the church must not close its eyes to that fact."

### Sexism: Still a Challenge

In this writer's view, and judging from the experiences of many women attending the assembly, the WCC could use a Program to Combat Sexism in addition to its Program to Combat Racism. But thus far, the WCC venture advocating equal status for women is called Community of Women and Men in the Church, its wording encompassing "the ultimate goal." But barring a name change and new thrust, every woman will have to program her head to combat sexism on the road to that "beloved community."

Consider this kaleidoscope of testimony from women during the meeting:

- "I am not supposed to be interested in feminism. The men say, 'African women are not oppressed,' and the men speak for us in these international forums. But we have a saying that the person who sleeps by the fire knows how hot the flame is." Mercy Oduyoye, Ghanaian living in Nigeria.

- "Women are frustrated by the style of the plenary sessions. Men claim the microphone, make long speeches no one is interested in, and women get little

*Continued on page 21*



# 'Third World' Beneficiary Of WCC Option for Poor

by Jim and Margaret Goff

**T**here is no question about Third World participation in the sixth assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver July 24-Aug. 10. Forty-two percent of the delegates were from the so-called developing countries. In the new Central Committee, which oversees the work of the WCC until the next assembly seven years hence, 44% represent Third World churches, as do four of the seven new presidents—Walter Makhulu (from Botswana), Dame Nita Barrow (Barbados), Paulos Gregorios (India) and Patriarch Ignatios (Syria).

For Christians and churches in many parts of the Third World, the unity they experience in the World Council is a desperately needed source of strength.

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**James and Margaret Goff** are "fraternal workers" with the Presbyterian Church (USA) stationed in Managua, Nicaragua at the Antonio Valdivieso Ecumenical Center. Formerly editors of *Latinamerica Press* in Lima, they have long served in the mission field as journalists.

Deputy General Secretary Konrad Reiser, commenting on the importance of the ecumenical fellowship, said, "Many churches are in weak positions, confronted by the powers arrayed against them; they need a network of solidarity." The World Council provides that solidarity.

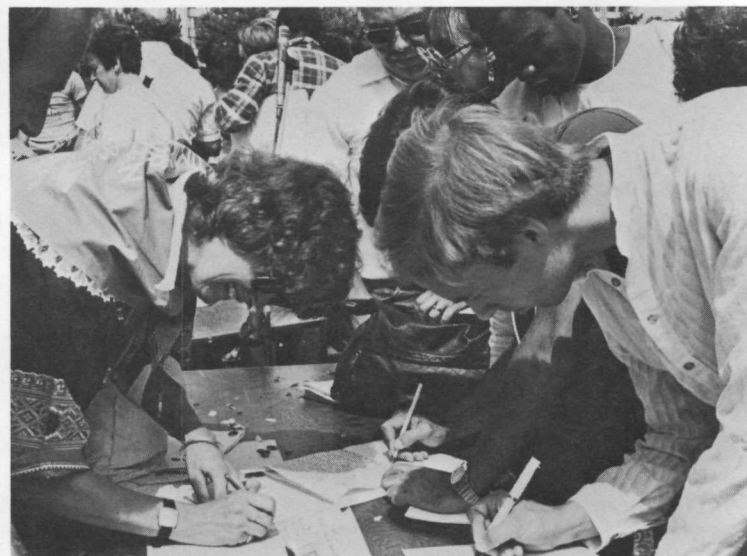
Unlike international organizations such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Bank, or the International Monetary Fund where the big contributors control decisions to favor their interests, the World Council's policies are openly biased in favor of the poor. The WCC's Program to Combat Racism, the program of its Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development, and its constant preoccupation with human rights are some of the better known examples of this option.

"To be poor," says Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez, "means to die of hunger, to be illiterate, to be exploited by other people, not to know one is exploited, not to know one is a person." The churches of the World Council

demonstrate their concern over hunger, illiteracy and exploitation in a number of ways, as illustrated in the world body's interest in Nicaragua.

In the new experiment in that Central American country, the WCC provided \$2,200,000 for its Literacy Crusade, which reduced illiteracy from 58% to 12%. Further, the WCC has given \$2,500,000 for health projects, including aid to health brigades (to vaccinate against polio and other diseases); and funds for the country's psychiatric hospital. For child care centers the WCC has given \$300,000 and for the relocation of the Miskito Indians in Tasba Pri, \$500,000. These and other donations bring the total of World Council contributions to Nicaragua to almost \$6 million.

Just as important as financial aid are public demonstrations of support for the poor in situations of injustice. The sixth assembly made a number of statements concerned with injustice being practiced against the weak. To look at Nicaragua again, an example of this form of solidarity was a message sent to UN Secretary



**More than 300 Central American and U.S. participants put their names to a "Covenant for Life" at the WCC meeting. Above, the Rt. Rev. Cornelius Wilson, Anglican Bishop of Costa Rica, signs while waiting behind, from left, are Marilyn Moore, Bishop James Armstrong (partially obscured) and Jane Carey Peck, U.S. delegates. Photo top right, Nicaraguans Andy Shogreen, left, Melita Wall and Tomas Tellez, discuss the Covenant document. Bottom right, among Europeans adding signatures in support were the Rev. Ann Coldan of Geneva, left.**

General Javier Perez de Cuellar during the assembly by Philip Potter and Archbishop Ted Scott, General Secretary and Moderator, respectively, of the WCC. In it the church leaders said that assembly participants were expressing "deep concern about the recent escalation of threats to use massive armed force against Nicaragua." They called on the UN official to redouble his efforts to resolve peacefully the Central American conflict.

The WCC issued firmer and more comprehensive statements, to be sure,

especially when it addressed the status of human rights in specific regions and countries—the Middle East, Afghanistan, South Africa, Cyprus and Central America, for example. Each illustrated the Council's concern for peace and justice and each was critical of policies of the superpowers and their allies.

● In its Middle East statement, the WCC said that churches should help create a wider awareness of the justice of the Palestinian cause and of the suffering of Muslims and Christians living in East Jerusalem and other occupied territories

as part of an overall effort to help bring peace to that area. "Prospects for peace have been pushed back further by recent events," the delegates said, and reaffirmed the WCC position that a peaceful settlement requires "the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all territories occupied in 1967" and "the right of all states, including Israel and Arab states, to live in peace with secure and recognized boundaries." The latter includes "the rights of Palestinians to self-determination including the right of establishing a sovereign Palestinian state."



● The Afghanistan resolution called for continued WCC humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees, now more than 3 million in number in Pakistan and Iran, according to UN estimates. The WCC affirmed initiatives taken by the UN for resolving the conflict, including the call for “an end to the supply of arms to opposition groups from outside; withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in the context of an overall political settlement, including agreement between Afghanistan and the USSR; guarantee of the settlement by the USSR, the USA, People’s Republic of China and Pakistan; and creation of a favorable climate for the return of the refugees.”

● The statement on Central America denounced the U.S. “policy of military, economic, financial and political initiatives designed to destabilize the Nicaraguan government, redeem the international image of Guatemala’s violent dictatorship, resist the forces of historic change in El Salvador, and militarize Honduras in order to insure a base from which to contain the aspirations of the Central American peoples.” (*See WITNESS September issue.*)

Third World perceptions sometimes catch the churches in the developed world up short. One such occasion in Vancouver came when Allan Boesak, South African theologian and President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, told a plenary session that if it were not careful the ecumenical movement’s opposition to the nuclear arms race could lead to an “ideology of oppression.”

“Many Christians in the Third World,” he said, are concerned that “the issue of peace will be separated from the issue of justice, making of peace primarily a North Atlantic concern,” while deprivation and injustice, especially in Third World countries, are ignored. We cannot use the issue of peace to avoid the dilemmas of injustice, racism, hunger, and poverty, he added. Earlier he had

said at a peace conference in Uppsala, “Most of us don’t know the meaning of nuclear, but we know the meaning of hunger.”

If the churches do not address the unresolved issues of injustice, Boesak said, “we will make of our concern for peace an ideology of oppression which in the end will be used to justify injustice.”

A warning to peoples of the Third World was made by West German theologian Dorothee Solle in a major address to the assembly: “Do not follow our example. Claim back what we have stolen from you, but do not follow us.”

Addressing one of the assembly’s sub themes, “Life in All Its Fullness,” Ms. Solle said that material wealth and fullness of life cannot coexist. By participating in structures that impoverish millions of people, the world’s wealthy not only make impossible fullness of life for themselves, she said, but also strip the poor of life’s goodness. (*See Solle address this issue.*)

Many delegates gave witness to their conviction that while material wealth divides, solidarity in the search for justice and peace unites. Central Americans and U.S. citizens at the assembly dramatized their unity in Christ in the public signing of a covenant to “create a living bridge of solidarity in Christ spanning the Americas.” The more than 300 signers said that “Vigorous attempts are being made by those in position of power and influence to divide us . . . Here we reaffirm that . . . we are one in Christ.”

Church people who are poor in terms of money have other gifts to share. Tomas Tellez, representing the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua, hailed the opportunity to “share the little that we have which is our way of life as Christians in Nicaragua” and felt enriched by knowing the experiences others have had in Christ. The Nicaraguan Baptist Church was one of two received into

WCC membership at the assembly, the other being the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of South Africa.

Nicaraguan Moravian pastor Andy Shogreen saw a close relationship between the concept of an option for the poor and the WCC’s major programs. “I find in them a great concern for the poor, their human rights as well as their right to a dignified life and self-determination,” he said.

Brazilian ecumenist and sociologist, Professor Jether Pereira Ramalho, called attention to the fact that in Latin America for four centuries the church has been “linked to the dominant class” and “looked upon with favor by those in power.” But in recent years “the signs of the times and the action of the Holy Spirit have challenged both the Protestant and Catholic churches to change their options by moving toward greater faithfulness to Christ’s mandates and the Gospel. Today in Latin America the great challenge and happening is the growing awareness of poor people that they have the right to participate in the construction of their own project of society and life,” he added. “It can be said,” Pereira continued, “that in some countries the common people invaded the church and questioned it positively and profoundly. This is a very healthful element and a sign of renewal at every level—biblical interpretation, liturgy, spirituality and social commitment.”

In its final message, the sixth assembly of the World Council of Churches declared, “We renew our commitment to justice and peace. Since Jesus Christ healed and challenged the whole of life, so we are called to serve the life of all. We see God’s good gift battered by the powers of death. Injustice denies God’s gifts of unity, sharing and responsibility. When nations, groups and systems hold the power of deciding other people’s lives, they love that power. God’s way is to share power, to give it to every person . . .” ■

# Life In Its Fullness

by Dorothee Solle



*West German theologian Dorothee Solle has an international reputation for tackling "unmentionable topics," especially those which middle-class Christians would just as soon avoid. She presented the following reflection at the World Council of Churches meeting in Vancouver. While earning kudos from most of the assembly, it also prompted one disaffected delegate to label her a "West-basher."*

*Dr. Solle holds graduate degrees from the Universities of Gottingen and Cologne and has taught philosophy, literature and theology at several German universities. She is the author of *Revolutionary Patience* and *Of War and Love*, and since 1975 has been teaching at Union Theological Seminary, New York.*

I am a woman from one of the wealthiest countries in the world; a country whose history is tainted with bloodshed and the stench of gas that some of us who are Germans have not been able to forget; a country that today has the world's greatest concentration of nuclear weapons lying at the ready. The grief I feel with regard to my own country, the friction that sets me at odds with my society, springs from my belief in the life of the world as I find it in the poor man from Nazareth who had neither wealth nor weapons. This man portrays the life of the world for us and points us towards the ground of our being, to God. Christ is God's exegesis. (John 1:18)

By saying this, I do not intend any kind of religious imperialism, as though there could be no other expositions of God in other religions; I mean it rather in the sense of unconditional commitment to become fully involved with this Jesus Christ.

Christ came into the world that all may have life "and have it in all its fullness." What is this "life in all its fullness"? Where does it take place? Who lives it? Looking at our world I see two ways in which life is being destroyed: *outward poverty and inward emptiness.*

For a good two-thirds of the human family there is no such thing as "life in all its fullness" because they are impoverished, living on the edge of death in stark, economically conditioned poverty. They are hungry, they have no shelter, no shoes, no medicine for their children, no clean water to drink, no work — and they see no way of getting their oppressors off their backs.

I would like to quote from a letter from a Brazilian woman, which she dictated to a nun because she herself cannot read or write.

*"My name is Severina, I come from the Northeast. Up there in*

*my country two of my babies died because I had no milk. One day in my village I saw 42 little coffins being carried to the cemetery. My sister-in-law who was very poor had 17 children: three of them lived, all the others died before they were four. Of the three who lived two are not normal. I was with her for the births and sometimes there wasn't even a clean piece of sheet to wrap the baby in. That's what happens in lots of families — thousands even — 10 or 15 children are born and five or six of the 10 die. And there are priests who tell us, 'If you have seven children who die as infants you will be blessed: a crown of angels awaits you in heaven.' But who really knows what it means for a woman to carry a child for nine months, weeping for the first three of them because she knows she will never see her baby grow*

*up — and that perhaps 10 times or more. Is she to love the child only to see it die of starvation . . . ?”*

But Christ came into the world so that all might have life “in all its fullness.” The absolute impoverishment, which is a crime in a technologically developed world, is destroying people physically, spiritually, mentally and religiously because it poisons hope and makes a mockery of faith by turning it into helpless apathy. What comes between Christ and the world’s impoverished peoples is exploitation, the sin of the rich who are seeking to destroy Christ’s promise. Christ says in John’s Gospel: “I am the door; anyone who comes into the fold through me shall be safe. He shall go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal, to kill, to destroy; I have come that human beings may have life, and may have it in all its fullness.” (*John 10:9-10*)

Christ and the thief stand at opposite extremes. The thief comes to plunder the poor so they will die. Christ came to bring fullness of life. We are involved in both these undertakings, the plundering and the fullness of life. Either we participate in Christ’s mission, or we participate in the thief’s plans for the world. As long as we remain merely victims or merely spectators in this struggle for justice, we are supporting the thief and his crimes.

Life in all its fullness is an impossibility when one is forced to live in absolute poverty. But even in the wealthy First World there is very little fulfillment to be found. What comes between Christ and the middle classes of the First World is not material poverty but spiritual emptiness. The meaninglessness of life perceived by many sensitive individuals ever since the beginning of industrial development has now become a widespread experience among people in the First World: nothing delights them, nothing moves them deeply, their relationships are superficial and inter-

changeable, their hopes and dreams go no further than their next holiday trip. But God created us as men and women with a capacity for working and loving. We participate in creation in our work and in our sexuality in the widest sense of the word.

Fullness of life means amongst other things becoming a worker and a lover. For most people in the First World, however, life is more like a long death lingering over many years. It is pain-free: there are pills to spare, after all. It is feeling-free: “Don’t be so emotional” is an expression of strong disapproval in our language. It is without grace because life is seen as self-achieved and not as a gift from the Creator; it is life without a soul lived in a world which calculates everything in terms of what

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*“There is a way of doing theology in which the poor and economically exploited are never seen or heard — and that is apartheid theology.”*

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it’s worth. We are empty and at the same time surfeited with superfluous goods and products. There is an odd relationship between the many objects we possess and consume and the emptiness of our real existence. While Christ came that we might have fullness of life, capitalism came to turn everything into money.

In the Gospel we read the story of the rich young man who seemed to possess fullness of life in the form of many possessions yet is overcome by the inner emptiness of his life. Life has treated him kindly. He has what he needs and much more. But his questions go beyond being satisfied in this material sense. He asks “What shall I do with my life? What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Mark tells us that Jesus looked upon the rich young man and loved him.

(*Mark 10:21*) Jesus wants to draw him, and all of us, into a fuller life. But there is something radically wrong with the young man’s notion of eternal life, for he thinks: I have everything, I have obeyed all the rules, there is only one thing missing and that is: the meaning of life, fulfillment.

Jesus turns this expectation upside down: You don’t have too little, you have too much. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow me.” (*Mark 10:21*)

Many middle-class people today are searching for a new spirituality. They have training and a profession, education and a secure income, family and friends but they are looking for something more — religious fulfillment, food for the soul, consolation; all this on top of material security. A religious added value, as it were, for people who are already overprivileged. They are seeking spiritual fullness of life in addition to material fullness, blessing from above in addition to their wealth.

But Jesus rebuffs this pious hope. Fullness of life does not come when you already have everything. You first have to empty yourself to receive God’s fullness. Give away what you have, give it to the poor then you will have found what you are looking for. The story of the rich young man ends in sorrow; and he goes away. Perhaps he will become depressive, perhaps he will start drinking, perhaps he will cause an automobile accident. He wouldn’t let himself be drawn into more life, fullness of life, sharing of life.

In many towns in West Germany you will see painted on walls the English words, NO FUTURE. The people who feel like this are young and energetic; yet they cannot imagine bringing a child into this world, they have stopped planting trees. Life in its fullness, the promise of Christ, produces only a weary smile. Sometimes their sorrow is turned out-



wards, in aggressiveness, often it is turned inwards, in depression.

Jesus, too, in our story goes sorrowfully on his way. "How hard it will be for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" (*Mark 10:23*) The kingdom of God, eternal life, all are destroyed by wealth of possessions, exploitation, injustice. Why are so many people in the rich world so empty? With a superfluity of things life itself becomes superfluous. Among the younger generation in particular there is a strong and growing desire to break away from dependence on too many possessions. Henry David Thoreau said: "The possibilities of life diminish as so-called 'means' increase. The best thing a rich man can do to preserve his humanity is to realize the dreams he cherished when he was poor."

### Theology Explains

Economics alone cannot explain it. (They have everything, people say, what more do they want!) I doubt, too, whether individual psychology, that opium of the middle class, can offer much explanation here. I don't see that we need to know the rich young man's parents and analyze their relationship with their son before we can understand his history with God. What I think we need, in fact, if we are to understand the empty and meaningless life of the rich, is knowledge of God, theology.

If we hide ourselves from God behind the barrier of our many possessions so that God cannot touch us, then we die — the long death of the middle classes and also, now, of the elites of Third World countries. Wealth acts as a wall more invincible by far than the famous walls of Jericho: We set ourselves apart, we make ourselves untouchable, and our wall is soundproof so that we cannot hear the cries of the poor. Apartheid is not just a political system in an African country; apartheid is a certain way of thinking, feeling and living without being conscious of what is happen-

ing around us. There is a way of doing theology in which the poor and economically exploited are never seen or heard — and that is apartheid theology.

I am speaking here about my own social class, but I would also want to include all those from other economic situations who pursue the same ideals even though they may not yet have achieved them. Dear sisters and brothers from the Third and Second Worlds, I beg of you: *Do not follow our example!* Claim back what we have stolen from you, but do not follow us. Otherwise, like the rich young man, you will have sorrowfully to bid farewell to Christ. Do not pursue the idea of "fullness of life" as we have developed it in the Western World. It is a delusion. It separates us from God, it makes us rich, and dead.

The spiritual emptiness of the rich is a result of the economic injustice on which they capitalize. We have chosen a system based on money and violence. The rich young man will have bouts of depression. He cannot change his life, he can only make it secure. And he will have to keep making it more and more secure to prevent anything being taken away from him. So he stockpiles weapons; and the mild depression prevailing in so many European and North American churches is tantamount in practice to acquiescence in militarism. They have no hope because they trust in the deadly peace of the arms advocates. Money and violence go together: Those who make money their God are bound to make "security" their state ideology and armaments a political priority.

Some Christians in our countries are saying: What's so bad about safeguarding our security with arms? We're not actually going to use the bomb, just the threat of it. In reality, however, the bomb destroys the fullness of life Christ has promised to us. It destroys the life of the poor in the material sense, the life of the rich in the spiritual sense. It has

become lodged inside us, it has taken possession of us. We will never know fullness of life while we live under the bomb which has become the most potent symbol in our world, the thing our politicians research and pay for, love and fear above all else, in other words, their God.

If it is true that a superfluity of things makes life superfluous, then the way to change is to become poorer. We cannot fill our inner emptiness with God at no cost to ourselves by some kind of cheap spirituality, as some seem to imagine. We first have to empty ourselves outwardly of all that overfills us. Becoming empty for God means emptying ourselves and relinquishing or reducing all the possessions of our world: money and violence. To become poorer and rely less and less on violence, that is the change of heart which leads to fullness of life.

Jesus tried to bring the rich young man to break with his own world, with its attitudes and values, and his own privileged social class. Christ faces us with the same question: How long will you continue to go along with a world order which is based on exploitation and oppression? How long will you continue to benefit from the system which is dominated by "the thief who comes to steal, to kill, to destroy"? As far as my country is concerned, this question is a little easier to answer today than it was just three years ago.

### New Life In Churches

To be honest, I would never have expected our traditional churches, which I have often felt to be a grave in which Christ is buried, to generate so much liberation and life. A few years ago many of the most thoughtful people I know longed to be in the Third World because there the struggles are more clear-cut, fronts more clearly defined, hopes more immediate. "I wish I were in Nicaragua," one student wrote to me,

"life in Christ would be possible there." To many of us it seemed that we could only find Christ at the side of the poor and not in our First World context.

I suspect things have changed somewhat in this respect now. We do not live in El Salvador, but we do live under the domination of NATO. In its planning offices decisions are made that affect our lives and the lives of other peoples. Sacrifices are being offered there to false gods and that is where our struggles must lie. Our historical task is to fight for peace and against militarism. This is how we can participate in the Third World's struggle for liberation. No one who feels a bond with the poor has any reason to despair today nor to engage in senseless acts of destruction and self-destruction. Since the latest arms build-up began with a view to perpetuating the reign of terror, we know exactly where our El Salvador lies. Our Vietnam. Our Soweto. Our liberation struggle. Our conversion away from money and violence to justice and peace.

Many Christians believe freedom from violence will only be possible in the Kingdom of God, while on earth war and poverty are inevitable. People who adopt this view, however, are separating God from the Kingdom and, like the rich young man, seeking an eternal life devoid of justice and a fullness of life devoid of love, which is an absurdity. Human richness lies in a person's relationships with others, in his or her being for others. Far from being decreased by sharing with others, the fullness of life increases as miraculously as the five loaves and two fishes. Christ sets us free from life-consuming poverty and life-sapping inner emptiness; he makes us free to enter into a new community in which we need no longer do violence to one another but can make one another happy. We have become one with the living love and do not need to postpone eternal life to another age than our own. ■

## Call for Justice In Economic Life

**A** *Work, Theology and Action Conference to explore the roots of economic dislocation, reflect theologically, and commit the religious community to action will take place Oct. 14-15 in Oakland, Cal. Among Conference organizers are the Rev. Richard W. Gillett of Church and Society, and WITNESS contributing editor. The Rev. John Moyer of the Council on Economic Justice and Work, San Francisco, was responsible for preparing a draft of the conference "call to action," which appears below. Further information about the meeting can be obtained from Gillett at 213-225-9523, or Moyer at 415-835-9631.*

*The work of justice will be peace,  
the result of justice will be security,  
and confidence forever.*

— Isaiah 32:17

*Trouble is coming to the one who  
builds a tower with blood or  
founds a city on injustice.*

— Micah 2:12

**G**od calls us "to serve the cause of justice." (Isaiah 42:6) We seek to do so by exploring the roots of our current economic dislocation, by reflecting theologically on what we find, and by committing ourselves, and the religious community, to action.

Our society has built its economic tower "with blood," and the consequences of its spilling are apparent to all: the highest levels of unemployment since the Depression, massive plant closings (400,000 workers on the West Coast alone have been terminated in the past two years), a similar loss of jobs and industries because of corporate mergers, and major economic setbacks for women, racial minorities, undocumented workers, and workers in border

industries. The human costs are high:

- communities are unable to provide the benefits and care needed by people;
- family violence, physical and mental illness, and suicide have increased;
- one-industry towns are decimated;
- unemployment insurance is insufficient to maintain those laid off;
- bankruptcies are on the rise;
- home owners are victims of mortgage foreclosures;
- new wage contracts contain increasing demands by employers for damaging concessions by workers.

People are suffering. Those who are suffering the most are members of racial minorities and women, for racism and sexism flourish in this climate of layoffs and job losses. But white middle-aged "heads of household" are also feeling the pinch; industrial workers, unskilled laborers and middle management are beginning to meet one another at the unemployment office.

Another devastating personal consequence is that unemployed persons often feel that it is their fault that they are out of work. This leads not only to

depression and loss of self-esteem, but diverts attention from the fact that there are social causes for their unemployment.

At least three factors contribute to this crisis:

1. Increasing numbers of corporations are moving their capital and production facilities to new locations where cheap unorganized labor is available and there are less stringent (or non-existent) environmental protection controls. Whether the moves are made to another state or overseas, they provide a cheap tax base and cheap labor for the corporations, with a consequent rise in profits for the few. But the social and human costs are high: a shrinking tax base, major job losses and plant closings in the area that are abandoned. And in the new locations, working conditions and wages are often below minimal humane standards.

2. The current expansion of high technology, along with new forms of factory automation and robotization, also contribute to economic dislocation. When one machine can do the work of 50 employees, the 50 employees are soon out of work. And when the products in question are devices for use in the "information society" which provides services for only a small portion of society, the problem is simply exacerbated. Moreover, rapid growth industries are subject to intense competition, and follow the established pattern of moving to areas where they can cut cost production with cheap labor and a lower tax base.

3. The growth in military spending, weapons production and the arms race is another cause of economic dislocation, leading to a rise in both inflation and unemployment. Numerous economic studies have shown that war-related industries generate less jobs than comparable peace-related ones, and also produce goods that are not bought and sold in the market and thus produce

no stimulus for economic growth. Annual cost-overruns on military contracts likewise harm the entire economy save for the few corporations that are short-run beneficiaries.

Amid all the changes that the above factors have introduced, one fact remains unchanged: *The victims of these policies are those at the lower end of the economic scale*, though a growing percentage of the middle class are beginning to be affected. What is common to all is that they have become



people at the mercy of decisions about their lives over which they have no control.

They are beginning to say: "We are not willing to be victims, objects of impersonal corporate and industrial mismanagement. We are subjects, who call for justice in our economic lives. We demand work that serves and humanizes all of us, rather than work that places profits above persons and justifies poor working conditions, massive layoffs and unemployment."

The religious community has an

obligation to hear them.

Too often our religious tradition has encouraged the notion that prosperity is a reward from God and poverty a punishment. We affirm, on the contrary, that God provides sufficient resources for the entire human family, and that with proper stewardship, using justice as a guideline, all of God's children can have creative work and receive appropriate benefits.

Our tradition asserts that God is in the midst of the ongoing struggle to create justice. To know such a God therefore means to help the oppressed, to side with the victims, to love those in need. The economic dislocation that leads to oppression, victimization and need is the result of evil imbedded within institutions in our society. In the name of justice, in the name of God, they must be changed.

This call for change on behalf of the victims is central to our religious heritage. Jeremiah reminds us that to "practice justice and right," and "to defend the cause of the poor and needy," is not only "good," but is what it means to know God. (*Jeremiah 22:13-17*) Amos calls us not to concentrate our attention on "religious" practices, but "to let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream." (*Amos 5:24*) Mary tells us that God has "filled the hungry with good things, and the rich God has sent empty away," (*Luke 1:53*), and Jesus, echoing the ancient prophet, announced his own program as bringing "good news to the poor," and "liberty to the oppressed". (*Luke 4:18*) Isaiah shares a classic vision of social justice in relation to the fruits of work: "They shall build houses and inhabit them. They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat." (*Isaiah 65:21-23*)

The Latin American bishops have stated that "the church must make a



preferential option for the poor." Only when the needs of the poor, the victims of injustice, have been met, can we talk of a just society.

This "preferential option" means a reappraisal of the meaning of work and the uses and control of wealth in our world. In God's plan for creation, special value is given to the dignity of human work. Through work, people become co-creators with God, and contribute to the community the products of their own creative spirit. A sense of self-worth emerges as human work provides a basis for participation in the development of the whole community. When people are not able to exercise their own creative spirit, or contribute their labor to the whole community, damage is done to the individual, the community, and the whole of creation. Our tradition therefore calls for a community in which economic rights are inherent in the very doing of work, and in which work provides for self-fulfillment and community enrichment. Simple justice demands that both community and worker share in the commonwealth of labor.

In the current economic dislocation, much of the creative energy people want to contribute is lost. We agree with John Paul II, that "[new conditions will] require a reordering and adjustment of the structures of the modern economy and the distribution of work . . . Work is for the person, and not the person for work." (*Laborem Exercens*) Our common task, therefore, is to transform the structures of work in order that we may be the co-creators we are meant to be.

## A Call to Action

We are called to participate in the transformation of our world, to bring an end to economic decisions that produce victims, and we have not done this adequately.

We confess that even within our religious communities we have allowed

class, race and gender inequalities to separate us from the goal of justice. We have invested our resources in the service of money markets rather than in the service of persons. We have exalted patronage over love, welfare over empowerment, charity over economic justice. We have allowed concern for the individual to blind us to the unjust nature of our socio-economic structures. Repentance for such failures must lead us in new directions.

We need an educational process that will teach us to put people before profits, sharing visions of economic justice that are grounded in new strategies for industrial and agricultural production. We need a pedagogy that can help us discover effective and humane uses of new technologies, and point us toward alternatives to the current industrial and military use of resources. We urgently propose the development of such pedagogies in our seminaries and other centers of religious education.

In addition, we urge our religious communities, and individuals within them to:

1. support coalitions of religious bodies, community organizations and labor groups, which will struggle to end plant closures, and explore alternative means of providing jobs and centers of production;

2. advocate legislation that will limit economic dislocation, support community and worker participation, and exercise control over economic structures that affect the entire community;

3. support measures directed toward full employment and guaranteed income for all, particularly our exploited minority workers, immigrants, women, youth and senior citizens;

4. organize to convert dependence upon military contracts in our communities to more socially useful forms of production;

5. foster programs responding to the immediate needs of persons who are

victims of current economic dislocation, including centers where unemployed persons can organize for empowerment;

6. support appropriate stockholder resolutions and pension plan proposals aimed at economic renewal;

7. affirm small businesses in their efforts to employ people and produce goods and services;

8. encourage reinvestment in our communities to develop cooperatives, worker ownership of production centers, and emphasize the production of basic goods and services needed by the community, such as food, shelter, clothing, energy and communications;

9. support national and international agencies of the religious communities in their activities on behalf of justice;

10. urge that capital held in trust by religious communities be used for these ends, giving a central place to the most economically exploited members of such communities in the formation of new policies and practices.

As members of the religious communities in the western United States, we call upon our sisters and brothers elsewhere to become part of a covenant for economic justice, so that work life can be a vehicle of human justice, and the work of our hands an act of praise. ■



*Halloween ghosts are symbols of the demonic which still plagues humankind, according to our WITNESS editorial. If you looked carefully under the "sheets" of this issue you possibly found references to those demons in the lines of all our articles. Let us pray.*

## Cuba Meets the (Church) Press

# 'Revolution Cannot Be Exported'

by Mary Lou Suhor

Ordinarily, Central Committee Headquarters of the Communist Party in Havana would seem an unlikely setting for eight editors of the religious press to be pursuing a story. But there I sat among four men and four women from the Associated Church Press who had just ended a week's tour of Cuban churches and government institutions, in mid-May.

We had collected dozens of interviews with churchpeople and Cuban officials in an effort to understand how Christians operate in a socialist environment, and before we left we were promised a briefing on Cuba's foreign policy. Since a travel ban invoked by the U.S. government had drastically curtailed visits from broad segments of our society, the offer of a group interview around foreign policy was especially anticipated by editors from the States.

We were firing questions at Jose Arbesu, vice-director of the Department of the Americas. His responsibilities included foreign relations between Cuba and the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Foremost on our minds in that ambience was how Cuba saw itself in the throbbingly sensitive area of Central America.

Lee Ranck, Methodist editor of *Engage/Social Action*, took the plunge. "With regard to your Latin American policy: In the United States we hear that Cuba is the stimulus for all kinds of bad things going on in Latin America. Would you comment on that?"

"That's strange," responded Arbesu. "In Cuba we hear that all the bad things that happen in Latin America come from the United States."

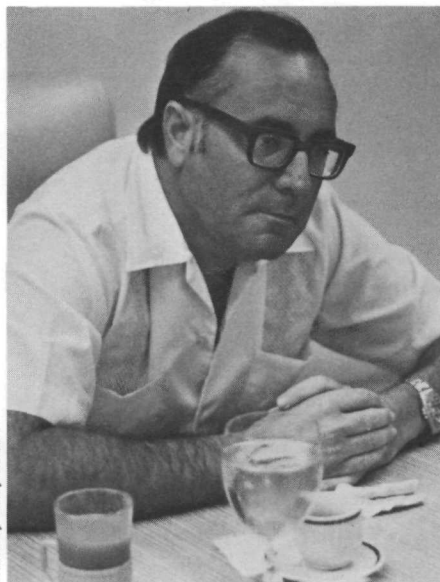


Photo by Terry Schulz

Jose Arbesu

The tension broken by laughter, the interview proceeded apace. Arbesu said that Cuba views the situation in Latin America as one of general economic and social backwardness dating back to colonial times. In more recent history, underdeveloped countries in this hemisphere have been under the control of oligarchies linked closely to the United States.

"This has provided a confrontation between the people and those oligarchies," he said, "and some of the confrontations have produced military dictatorships as a way to avoid revolution.

"It is alleged that we are the ones who instigate the problems. But before Fidel Castro was born, there was already a revolutionary movement going on in El Salvador. Before the Bolshevik Revolution, there was a revolution going on in Mexico. And a movement in Nicaragua

with Sandino as well. Before the time of the Cuban Revolution the dictatorship of Somoza was established in Nicaragua. So the roots of the problem have nothing to do with an East-West confrontation, but with internal confrontations in those countries which experience a high degree of exploitation, lack of freedom, poverty. The notion of external intervention and of an East-West conflict is set up to justify the role of the United States in Central America."

The present U.S. administration, he lamented, has an understanding of life "in black and white."

"For them, everything that happens is the result of the devil of Communism. They don't accept that countries have problems which stem from failing economies, hunger, lack of education, disease. This is the situation in El Salvador, in Guatemala, and still in Nicaragua, because Nicaraguans have not yet had the opportunity to change what they inherited from Somoza. They have had to concentrate on defending their country from raids by counter-revolutionaries."

Arbesu told the visiting ACP delegates that although the roots of the problem in developing countries are similar, the solutions do not have to model Cuba.

"You cannot export a revolution. It is not merchandise. For example, in Nicaragua, those who started the revolution were not and are not Communists. They have their own position, their own policies. Their people believe in a pluralistic society. In El Salvador, the progressive revolutionary forces want a political solution. In spite of the fact that I would love to see socialism in these countries,

there are other realities and the solutions do not have to be the same."

Asked about the Domino Theory (if the U.S. allows El Salvador to turn Socialist, in the eyes of the U.S. Guatemala is next, then Mexico, then Denver, Col.), Arbesu said he did not believe in the theory "in terms of Central American countries conspiring against the United States." He thought, however, that the Vietnam Syndrome was prevalent in those in the U.S. government who are applying the methods that failed in Vietnam to Central America.

He insisted that the charge that Cuba and Nicaragua were involved in expediting arms to Salvadoran rebels was a canard. Now that 7,000 Somocistas are in training for raids across the Honduran border into Nicaragua, with the blessing and assistance of the United States, "the flow of arms" is no longer a serious issue, he said. What is being discussed blatantly now in the United States is the covert or overt overthrow of the government of Nicaragua, he added.

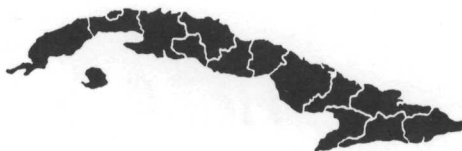
"I think that if the war against Nicaragua is not stopped, and if there is no serious attempt on the part of the United States to stop the war in El Salvador, the situation will become more and more terrible. For us, it is clear that the only solution is a political solution—through negotiations which guarantee the sovereignty and security of Nicaragua and which take into consideration the positions and aspirations of the progressive forces in El Salvador."

For the two Canadian editors among us, Bernie Wiebe of *The Mennonite* and Mary Shamley of *The Living Message*, (Anglican), Arbesu had high praise for their country. "Canada is not perceived as an adversary," he said. "Rather it is an example that it is possible to have good relations with a big neighbor."

He noted that 70,000 Canadians had visited Cuba as tourists last year and significant trade agreements existed be-

tween the two countries. Cuba was also appreciative of an early Canadian offer to moderate the Central American conflict, but Canada is currently awaiting the outcome of the present "Contadora" initiative taken by Mexico, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela, he said.

Arbesu listed several U.S. provocations against Cuba which had put even further distance between the two countries: the recent flight of the "Blackbird," (a U.S. reconnaissance plane) over the length of the island; the accusation that Cuban diplomats were involved in a "drug traffic ring;" the 1981 Reagan Administration White Paper, "Communist Influence in El Salvador," since discredited; CIA attempts against Castro's life, and the long-term U.S. economic blockade of Cuba.



"Given the tensions in Central America, the Caribbean, and internationally, in which the United States blames us as one of the main sources, and given the aggressive policy of the United States in Central America, I see no possibility of any conversations between Cuba and the United States. We do believe these problems have to be resolved by peaceful means, but under the circumstances, how can we think seriously of dialogue?" he asked.

On that somber note, Arbesu turned the interview around and asked, "How do *you* see the possibilities of lessening tensions in the area, given your experience of living in the United States? Canada is another thing." (Laughter)

"Very precarious," offered Dennis Shoemaker, former ACP president and

editor of *Communique*. Shoemaker recounted a visit he had with Right-wing leader Roberto D'Aubuisson at the end of 1982 in El Salvador.

"He made it absolutely clear that there would be no negotiations whatsoever. And he ended his discussion by telling us 'All we want is peace—peace just like your president wants.' I don't see in that any hope. It's a stonewall situation."

"On the other hand," Shoemaker added, the message we heard from the rebel forces in El Salvador was, 'We can win this war, only we must not. We must find a way to end it without winning it, for if we win it the American planes will not be far behind.' That's a painful message."

Ranck concurred. "There is a great stream of anti-Communist feeling in the United States, and a good deal of fear has been generated about what's happening."

Amidst the gloom I recalled, as a ray of hope, particularly in the U.S. Catholic community, the grass roots organizing and staffing of U.S. centers in solidarity with Central America by returned missionaries and layworkers who had served in the field.

"Also, tremendous consciousness raising resulted from the death of the three nuns and Catholic laywoman and the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador. That plus the fact that Christians are fighting side by side with progressive forces in the revolutionary movements at least makes certain segments of the population identify and ask hard questions about what's happening in Central America," I offered.

As the meeting ended, we shook hands with our Cuban hosts, all hoping that further dialogue might be possible in the future. Participating in the interview, in addition to those named, were Keith Clark, *The Disciple*, St. Louis; Terry Schutz, *Lutheran Women*, Philadelphia; and Gladys Peterson, *Interlit*, Chicago.



# Nicaraguans Visit Detroit

In response to increased U.S. military pressure on Nicaragua, a group of concerned citizens sponsored a visit to Detroit by Dr. Antonio Jarquin, Nicaraguan Ambassador to the United States, in late August.

Dr. Jarquin made several appearances on radio and television, held a press conference, and lectured at Mercy College. Arrangements for his trip were spearheaded by the Michigan Inter-church Committee on Central American Human Rights.

**Lois Leonard** is editor of *The Record*, Episcopal publication of the Diocese of Michigan.

Answering questions from reporters, Dr. Jarquin said emphatically that it was not the policy of his government to send arms to any other country, including El Salvador.

"We do not even have a common border with El Salvador," Dr. Jarquin pointed out. "Honduras is in between, and it is controlled by the United States. Arms get into El Salvador through many channels. There is an international black market in weapons. There are individuals who favor the guerrilla movement, including some in the United States."

"I personally would rather see the

guerrillas win than the present government of El Salvador," he said, "but the worst thing I could do would be to send them arms, because that would lend substance to U.S. charges."

On the question of Soviet and Cuban advisors in his country, Dr. Jarquin pointed out that the new Nicaraguan government, after deposing the notorious dictator, Somoza, asked the United States for help in the rebuilding of their country. The request was refused. Aid from the United States has been cut off and trade has been restricted. "Mexico, Venezuela, France, and Italy have helped us, as well as the socialist countries," he said. "We are a poor

## Hosting the Ambassador

One of the high points of the summer for me and my family was the visit to Detroit of the U.S. Ambassador from Nicaragua, Dr. Antonio Jarquin, and his three assistants: Ms. Angela Saballos, press officer; Mr. Amilcar Navarro, consul; and Mr. Francisco Campbell, political affairs officer.

The Ambassador and Ms. Saballos stayed with us at the Episcopal residence, and Messrs. Campbell and Navarro stayed at the home of the Rev. Robert E. Walton, associate minister of Central Methodist Church in Detroit. Our two sons, Harry and Donald, who happened to be home at the time of the Ambassador's visit, served as his drivers from the time he arrived at the airport until he left. We spent a great

deal of time as a family talking privately with the Ambassador and his press secretary as well as his other two aides.

We agreed that we have rarely met such scrupulous, humble, sincere, intelligent and loving people. Our two sons said of their time with the Ambassador and the others, that it was clearly one of the great experiences of their lives. Each of our Nicaraguan visitors related their years in Nicaragua and that of their families and friends during the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza, who was supported and kept in power by the United States. They told of unbelievable acts of torture and suffering inflicted upon thousands of Nicaraguans. During the last few years of the Somoza dictatorship more than 50,000 Nicaraguan citizens were murdered (the population of Nicaragua is 2.5 million).

We talked of other things, such as



**Bishop McGehee and Ambassador Jarquin**

the pluralistic composition of the present government; the difficulties which the new leadership has encountered, sometimes due to their inexperience (most government

**The Rt. Rev. H. Coleman McGehee, Jr.**, is Bishop of Michigan and Chair of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

## by Lois Leonard

country, and we must take help wherever we can find it. Our only stipulation is that our advisors do not expect us to become aligned with them."

Dr. Jarquin told reporters that his government had proposed that the United States and Nicaragua agree to get together and see that neither side in El Salvador receives foreign arms. "We have also proposed a ban on the building of any military bases in Central America from which aggression could be launched, since the United States is fearful of attack. We are still waiting for a reply to our proposals."

The presence of the U.S. fleet off the

coast of Nicaragua is viewed as provocative, the Ambassador said. "Our economy depends on trade. Commercial shippers are uneasy about approaching our ports. Furthermore," he continued, "We have evidence that frogmen are being trained in the waters off our coast with U.S. techniques and weapons. It is hard to believe that our ports are not targeted for covert attack."

The large-scale military maneuvers that the United States is conducting in Honduras on the Nicaraguan border are also a cause for concern, Dr. Jarquin said. "But we have determined we will not be provoked into conflict with Honduras," he added.

## by H. Coleman McGehee, Jr.

leaders in Nicaragua are in their 20s and 30s and have never run a government); the mistakes which the new government has made and tried to correct; the ambitious programs to alleviate hunger, poverty, illiteracy and poor health; the role of the church in Nicaragua; the "shameful" (my word) involvement historically of the United States in Nicaragua since 1909.

Having visited Nicaragua in March, 1983, I had heard and read about most of these things from other Nicaraguans and North Americans whom I had met throughout the country. I had related much of what I had heard to my family, but hearing it first-hand from such impressive people made it even more real and appalling to them. On reflection, it seems incredible that official representatives of the U.S. government cannot be more compassionate and understanding of the problems facing this young and new government.

There is a strong Christian and humanistic influence being brought to bear in Nicaragua of which our own Episcopal Church is a part. As a nation we could deepen that influence with serious dialogue (which thankfully we are beginning to do) and humanitarian aid instead of the militaristic approach which we have been pursuing. The alternative is to guarantee an anti-American regime in Nicaragua, bloodshed and disruption for which we shall have to bear the responsibility because of our long history of intransigence and unwillingness to listen.

Speaking for all the McGehees who shared in the Ambassador's trip to Detroit, we thank God for people like Dr. Jarquin and his assistants. They are beautiful people. They are a credit to God's creation and the human family. We are proud to have had a part in their visit and to have had the privilege of their presence in our home.

## Vancouver . . . Continued from page 8

opportunity to participate. Women are making their contribution better in small groups." Jean Skuse, head of the Australian Council of Churches and vice-moderator of the Central Committee.

- "Native Indian women continue to be persecuted for our race, color and sex. That's three strikes and we're out." Mary Dick, Kwagiutl nursing student.

- "Theology has developed not only outside of women's experience, but against women's experience. Feminist theology is a corrective. It may not be needed in 10 years, but it is necessary now to express women's deep and often mystical experiences with God." Sister Ellen Leonard, Toronto School of Theology.

- "Women in Africa struggle side by side with men, but when it comes to enjoying the fruits of the struggle, men push forward to take over. In rural development projects such as food processing, where there is no economic gain, the women lead. But bring in grinding machines and the women get pushed back to the kitchen and the men take over." Sitembiso Nyoni, Zimbabwe.

- "As far as participation goes, the assembly is a delight. But I don't think women have been very successful in impacting the nominating committee. Women make up more than half the church, but 26% representation on the WCC Central Committee is even less than the percentage of women delegates attending the assembly. We're not back to square one, but we haven't won. When the churches name delegates they think first of sending the moderator or the bishop." Ghana Judge Annie Jiagge, one of the six WCC presidents.

- "Men show us benevolent acceptance, but when it comes to sharing power, the crunch comes. This is not particular to this assembly alone, but reflects the situation of women in the

world. This process has made it visible. I also feel dominated by a male culture here. My body rebels against sitting long periods through hours of neat, rational statements in which emotions are suppressed." Baerbel von Wartenburg, director of the WCC sub-unit, Community of Women and Men in the Church.

Given the above, it is easy to understand why women in great numbers found their way to The Well and its daily programs for women, as well as for childcare, assistance with interpretation, films, music and dance, refreshments, or just a quiet place to reflect and meet friends. It provided a source of hope, consciousness raising, liveliness, laughter, and tears.

According to the Rev. Margaret Marquardt, Anglican priest who moderated the daily afternoon dialogues, more than 4,000 women visited the Lutheran Campus Center housing The Well during the 18-day assembly. Hundreds of women from Vancouver volunteered their services to make their sisters from around the world feel at home, she said.

A significant contribution to the assembly was made by those women who, speaking from the context of their struggle, were able to help people to make connections between various oppressions.

For example, Annette Hutchins-Felder, of the African-American Institute, political advisor to Coretta Scott King, said: "We have to move from our personal stories to analyze how to change systems. Poverty and racism must be put in a political context, and we must address institutions to effect change." She said that Black women were becoming more aware of economic factors affecting their lives. "In analyzing civil rights and Black power," she said, "we realized that we had gained the right to sit at lunch counters and go to desegregated movies, but what if we

were too poor to do either?"

And Darlene Keju-Johnson of the Marshall Islands, in an address to the assembly, protested nuclear experiments in the Pacific, which have left "terrifying effects" on women's bodies and on the children that they are bearing. She said that 66 nuclear bombs have been exploded at Bikini and Eniwetok, leaving a legacy of horror. Ms. Keju-Johnson has had one tumor removed and has three more. She is worried that if she has children, she might, like some Marshall Island women, have babies "with growths like horns on their heads or six fingers or toes," or the most dreaded "jellyfish baby," which breathes and moves up and down but "is not shaped like a human being — more like a bag of jelly."

Then Ruud van Hoogevest, WCC refugee service coordinator, described the lot of the "forgotten women" among the 15 million world's refugees, noting that besides the suffering inherent in the status, women frequently face rape, such as in the Gulf of Thailand, where sea pirates are raiding the boat people.

In the end, it was the bonding and networking of women that was perhaps the most important feminist aspect of the assembly. Every woman could somehow identify with each who made her way to a microphone, sometimes with faltering steps, to deliver a shaky-voiced message, perhaps about her experience with rape, violence, or prostitution.

The problem of power will persist until the next assembly.

Baerbel Von Wartenburg characterized the dilemma as a difference in value systems. "Holding on to power is a male syndrome, while women are more of the belief that you have to share power with others in order to build together."

How it will all be resolved may well be left to the Spirit, who, as Pauline Webb put it, "will take us where She will."

(Next month: *Racism and Ideology*)

## Resources

*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.* The result of a 50-year process of study and consultation, this text represents the theological convergence that has been achieved through decades of dialog. Over 100 theologians meeting in Lima in January, 1982, agreed to this statement. They represented virtually all the major traditions: Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Methodist, United, Disciples, Baptist, Adventist and Pentecostal. Paperback, \$3.50. Friendship Press, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10115.

*The Community of Women and Men in the Church.* Edited by Constance F. Parvey. The Sheffield Report, result of the Consultation on the Community of Women and Men in the Church, provides fascinating reading, particularly the crucial exchanges between Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie and Philip Potter, General Secretary of the WCC; and between Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann on the origins of patriarchy and the importance of overcoming it. Among topics covered: an analysis of class, race and sex; an African perspective on women and men; iconography; ministry and ordination of women; marriage, family and changing life styles. Ends with recommendations to the churches. Paperback, \$13.95. Fortress Press, 2900 Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pa. 19119.



**Letters . . . Continued from page 3**  
to crusade for it?

We were concerned about pollution in 1958 in the Ohio Valley, but the bishop told us "it is all in your mind," and that pollution was good as it meant jobs. Now the church is concerned about pollution.

When my husband was a parish priest, he helped a Black man learn ham radio in our basement. The man came in the back door and went out the back door. Yet we were run out of town by the vestry, and the bishop did nothing to help us. Now my husband is a worker priest and a physics teacher and he has been able to witness for Christ better in this capacity than in the parish ministry.

Is the Episcopal Church really interested in social justice, or is it just doing these things to be fashionable? Back in the 1950s I believed in justice for everyone, and I was called a communist by some of the church leaders who are so liberal now.

**Helen K. Zunes**  
**Chapel Hill, N.C.**

## **EPF Seeks Exec**

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship stands with THE WITNESS as an advocate for peace with justice, especially as evidenced in the recent June, July and September issues. We would like to inform your sympathetic constituency that the Episcopal Peace Fellowship is seeking applicants for an executive secretary. The position will be available in December.

For information, contact Catharine Ward, 2112 Popkins Lane, Alexandria, VA 22307.

**Mary H. Miller**  
**National Chairperson, EPF**  
**Murrysville, Pa.**

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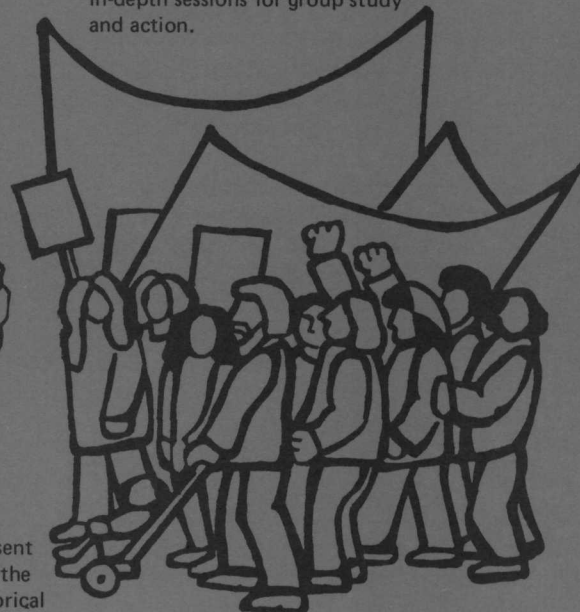


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