

Service Center, Home or Hazard?

By LEE WARREN
(Special to the Courier)

The Men's Service Center, a Community Chest agency which offers overnight housing and help to homeless men, is experiencing a singular lack of success in its search for a new home.

In January the Rochester zoning board refused the center's move to 290 Andrews St. Among the opposition to that move was St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Franklin Street.

Last week the Service Center withdrew an attempt to purchase the former Hudson Dairy Building at 33 Hudson Ave. Opposition to that move included the pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church and several Negro ministers.

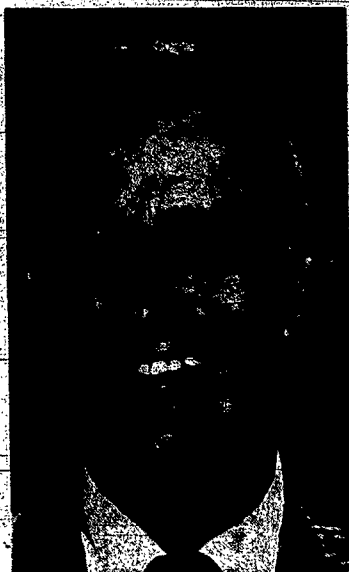
OBJECTIONS to the Service Center's move revolve around speculation that it will "degrade" a neighborhood. Conversely, the priests have been accused of displaying an "un-Christian" attitude.

As in all stories, there are two sides.

Rev. Thomas B. Richards, Baptist minister and social worker who has been executive director of the Men's Service Center 17 years, sits in an office with a newspaper clipping of the Genesee Crossroads-Urban Renewal Project on the bulletin board.

The Genesee Crossroads pro-

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REV. THOMAS RICHARDS
'poor man's YMCA'

"The men here are part of a subculture," the Rev. Mr. Richards said. "They're unskilled, uneducated, homeless non-family men. They do day labor, marginal work. Some are local, others transient."

"They're friendly and cooperative to the extent of their ability. The only crime they're frequently guilty of is public intoxication. Such men turn their aggressive tendencies in on themselves by drinking rather than by striking out in violent crime. They're no danger to women and children."

These men are "always just a step away from the jail or the county home," he said. The Service Center helps them to contribute what work they can to society.



FATHER VENTURA
'a chance to be reclaimed'

The non-denominational Service Center has a staff of seven, which includes two police officers part time.

The Service Center opens at 3 p.m. and closes at 11 p.m. All men must be out looking for work by 8 a.m.

"I can't guarantee how these men will act on the street any more than the YMCA can guarantee how their residents will act," the Rev. Mr. Richards said.

"But people have an overburdened stereotype of the homeless man. They're frightened by scare words."

Present plans call for the Center to remain as long as it can in its present building unless it can negotiate for another site. As a last resort, the Rev. Mr. Richards thinks he could reduce operations and move temporarily into the

Halfway House, a home for working men at 440 Plymouth Avenue South.

Father Gennaro Ventura, pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, is quick to point out that he feels that the work the Men's Service Center does is "good and necessary work."

He opposed the move to Hudson Ave. for other reasons.

He is in the unenviable position of pastor of a parish in a neighborhood exhibiting some signs of urban decay. Housing is substandard in some sections of the Seventh Ward. Since January, Father Ventura said some 50 families in his parish have moved, most of them outside the parish.

As pastor, his first responsibility is to the people of Mt. Carmel, who objected to the Men's Service Center's move and exercised their right to object.

At the old Dairy building, the Center would be able to accommodate only about 40 men, Father Ventura said, cutting their usual number in half.

"The homeless men would be turned away and where would they go without money? The police told us they sleep in the Broad Street subway, vacant houses or doorways," Father Ventura said.

"There are 1,250 children between kindergarten and eighth grade who attend Mt. Carmel School and School 14. Mothers don't want these children exposed to the sights which these men, who aren't always cold sober, might create."

Father Ventura said that a building larger than the dairy — with accommodations for 100 to 120 men — would not create the possibility of homeless men sleeping on the street or floating in the neighborhood at night.

"I doubt then that there would have been a problem," he said.

Another reason for resistance to the Service Center was neighborhood pride, Father Ventura added. "People felt that others had decided that the Seventh Ward was so bad it couldn't get worse, so why not bring in the Men's Service Center?"

"The area is rundown, but it has a chance to be reclaimed, if all the good families aren't driven out. I know 12 families who said they would leave if the Men's Service Center came in."

Will Kodak be a Parish?

Birmingham — (NC) — The big city parish as it exists today with its individual church may disappear entirely in the near future, it was suggested at a Catholic-sponsored conference at England's Birmingham University.

Speakers foresaw priests living together in groups each a chaplain to a different section of the local people, and celebrating Mass in factory plants and people's homes.

Dr. John Brothers, sociologist, said people today are no longer living closely together as families and neighbors. They tend to become more scattered and more closely associated with friends and fellow-workers often living miles apart.

The Church has to recognize this new type of grouping and adapt itself accordingly, it was stated.

The conference on 'Reshap-

ing the Christian Community' organized by the Newman Association, Catholic university group, was attended by many Non-Catholics and included an Anglican, a Methodist and a Quaker speaker.

They agreed that smaller congregations have a better chance of influencing those attending to be more socially united in their private lives.

Many Anglicans and Methodists, it was suggested, regard prayer meetings in people's homes as a useful way of supplementing church worship and making community prayer more personal and vivid especially for people who do not normally attend church.

Parish visiting and appointing of street wardens could greatly strengthen links between parishioners, it was said.

National and diocesan boards of professional laymen should be formed to advise the Church authorities on building and finance, speakers stated.

One speaker, Father Sylvester Copsey, said the laity should come forward and urge the clergy to let them do more. "Every parish priest must come to realize he is not a one-man band," he said. "Too many of our organizations are altar societies. We tend to look at ourselves instead of the job to be done. Lay action does not mean serving the clergy but joining them to serve the world."

Parents of Twelve Named To Council

Mexico City — (NC) — A husband and wife who are awaiting the birth of their 12th child have been appointed lay auditors of the Vatican Council by Pope Paul VI.

Jose Alvarez Icaza, 44-year-old civil engineer, and his wife, Luz Maria, 41, are the named council auditors. They were presented the papal document appointing them by Archbishop Luigi Raimondi, Apostolic Delegate in Mexico.

The Alvarez Icazas, who live in Mexico City, founded the Christian Family Movement in Mexico in 1953 and served as its first national presidents. The movement has now grown to some 12,000 Mexican families in 52 dioceses.

The pair has taken part in a number of international conferences on family life, and at the Christian Family Movement assembly in Peru last August they were named presidents of the Latin American secretariat of the CFM.

Accepting the appointment as an opportunity more than an honor, the Alvarez Icazas said: "We hope to become the

voice of a common and contemporary family — not a theological, or scientific voice, which we are not, but the voice of a normal family, like the millions of similar families existing in the world and which are to be served by the Church."

Expressing the hope that other American families, Catholics and other Christians alike, will write them to "tell us what they want us to say in Rome on topics that affect family life," they declared: "We believe that it is urgent for the voice of the family to be present in the council, because as the family is, so is the Church."

Grandfather To Be Priest

Rome — (RNS) — A grandfather 16 times over is among four Americans, four Britishers and an Irishman who will be ordained to the priesthood here this Spring by Amleto Cardinal Cicognani, Vatican Secretary of State and former Apostolic Delegate to the U.S.

He is John P. Smith, who practiced law for 40 years in New York. After his wife's death, he raised their five sons and a daughter, and four years ago he entered the English Beda College for late vocations.

Quebec Prelate Assails Errors

Chicoutimi — (NC) — Bishop Marius Pare of Chicoutimi, in a Lenten message to his diocese, strongly criticized what he described as widespread attacks on the Catholic Faith, the Church and its authority.

"There is being spread news and opinions of half truths liable to cause confusion in minds," he said. "Groups are being set against each other. The clergy, religious and nuns are under attack and their work minimized. Doubt is being cast on the wisdom of the Church, above all in its organization and administration, in order to undermine the confidence of the faithful."

The bishop deplored opinions being spread regarding family and moral problems, and the fact that young people are being taught that "liberty of thought" is a sign of maturity.

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