

Entertainment

Films on Poverty Lack Audience



Jeanne C. Riley, left, in pose from album cover of "Harper Valley P.T.A."

Catholic Press Features
New York — Critics have heaped praise on a prize-winning film that dramatically illustrates how the poor are exploited. But they know they are just talking to themselves. Americans just won't go to see that kind of film, the critics are convinced.

One New York City newspaper critic told his readers that "Voyage of Silence" had won a number of awards at the Venice Film Festival last year, including the International Catholic Film Office prize. "All of which is good," he said, "because it's not the kind of film that brings in money. 'Voyage of Silence' is a picture of absolute, unrelenting realism, downbeat, unsensational, in short, everything that's fine and unpopular."

The French-made film, being distributed in the U.S. by United Artists, depicts the injustices suffered by immigrant workers in France. According to the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures, "Voyage of Silence" can help to make Americans become aware of the plight of the poor abroad and at home.

Describing the film as "a plea for social justice in an unfeeling world," NCOMP noted that "a film such as this has much to offer in not only making us aware of the poor in other countries but also in sensitizing us to the degrading conditions of the poor in our own land," which has "a heritage of systematic ethnic exploitation," according to the Catholic film office's review of the film.

"Voyage of Silence" is about Portuguese laborers who are smuggled into France — immigration quotas prevent their legal entry — where they hope to earn a living, only to find themselves doomed to a life of squalor because of exploitation by employers.

"It is not comfortable entertainment," admitted NCOMP,



In "Voyage of Silence," Portuguese laborers are smuggled into France, where they hope to find work and a better way of life. The film focusses on Antonio, center, played by Marc Pico.

but it added that "this film on social justice by a director, Christian de Chalonge, whose work is surely one of the year's most impressive," was deserving of widespread support.

"Time" magazine labeled the film "a small masterpiece of compassionate observation" and "Voyage of Silence" has had similar praise from other publications, but critic Moira Walsh of "America," the Jesuit weekly review, panned the problem of why this film is not likely to attract large audiences.

"I wonder if the enthusiasm of critics, as contrasted with the lack of interest of the general public in a case like this, does not underline a prior commitment of the few to serious film expression that the many cannot be expected to share," Miss Walsh said.

"I also wonder whether a film can communicate with a general audience unless it in some way fills its fantasy needs or supports its outlook on life."

"What is more to the point, I wonder if the kind of material contained in 'Voyage of

Silence' could be dramatized in such a way that it could reach and emotionally involve a larger audience."

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'Sockin' It to 'Em

Catholic Press Features

Nashville — Last year, Bobbie Gentry's "Ode to Billie Joe" got considerable play in the pulpit, as priests and ministers found it ideal for sermons on Christian compassion. This year, it looks like the big hit with them is "Harper Valley P.T.A.," an immensely popular song about hypocrisy.

Written by Tom T. Hall, the son of a Kentucky minister, and recorded by 21-year-old Jeanne C. Riley, a secretary in a Nashville music-publishing firm, "Harper Valley P.T.A." has zoomed to the top of the record charts in both the popular and "country and Western" categories.

Preachers and religious columnists have found in its lyrics a modern application of Gospel passages on hypocrisy, and one priest-commentator observed that the song "applies particularly to the tendency of judging others in terms of white, middle-class standards of morality."

"Harper Valley P.T.A." tells about the day a teenage girl brought home a note to her widowed mother from the girl's junior high school P.T.A. The note criticized the mother for "wearing her dresses way too high," it said there were reports that the mother had been "drinking and a-running 'round with men and going wild," and it concluded that "we don't believe you ought to be a-bringing up your little girl this way."

That very afternoon, the song continues, "my Mama socked it to the Harper Valley P.T.A." by showing up at the P.T.A. meeting — mini-skirt and all — and asking the members such embarrassing questions as "Mister Baker, can you tell us why your secretary had to leave this town?" After pointing out that a goodly number of the P.T.A. members are boozehounds and that one of them "ought to keep her window shades all pulled complete-

ly down," the mother tells them:

"Then you have the nerve to tell me you think that as a mother I'm not fit. Well, this is just a little Peyton Place, and you're all Harper Valley hypocrites."

"Time" magazine, which described the song as "the runaway hit single of the late summer and autumn," said the song's "obvious thrusts at such obvious targets hardly make for brilliant satire" but "it seems to have tapped a new anti-middle-class market."

But the Rev. William D. Steele, who writes "The Church Today" column for "The Texas Catholic Herald" of the Houston and Austin dioceses, wrote of "Harper Valley P.T.A.":

"Everytime I hear it I think of the words of Jesus: 'Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never the plank in your own? How dare you say to your brother, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye' when all the time there is a plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.' (Matthew 7:1-5) Jesus could really sock it to 'em in his own way!"

Those who think that the song is an indictment of all parent-teacher associations "miss the point," Father Steele said.

"This popular song strikes much deeper than the P.T.A.," he commented. "It concerns that weakness of the flesh whereby we tend to sit in judgment of each other. In our own day it applies particularly to the tendency of judging others in terms of white, middle-class standards of morality. To the church-goers of his own day Jesus had some pretty harsh things to say: 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you!' (Matthew 21:31)."

Asian Catholics Deplore 'Brain Drain' to U.S.

By FR. JAMES COLLIGAN, M.M.

Tokyo — (NC) — The flow of trained medical personnel from Asian countries to the United States sparked spirited discussion among delegates to the Fourth Asian Congress of Catholic Doctors.

The Philippine delegation in particular voiced strong criticism of nations and situations fostering the medical brain drain and expressed concern over its effect on developing nations.

The 170 delegates to the Congress represented Japan, the Philippines, Korea, India, Australia, Ceylon, Taiwan and Hong Kong with their varied cultures and standards of living.

Dr. Vincent Rosales' detailed paper pointed out that 50% of students from developing nations who go to the U.S. for advanced training do not return to their native countries in five years. The nations from which these trained professionals de-

part can ill afford the flow of talent.

The Philippines more than most Asian nations, is especially subject to this medical brain drain because English is the medium of instruction and because the system of medical education is broadly patterned after that of the United States.

"The ultimate beneficiary of this phenomenon of the migration of scientists is the U.S. and possibly Canada," Dr. Rosales claimed.

Causes for the brain drain enumerated by Dr. Rosales include: 1) the appeal of higher standards of living in the more developed societies of the West; 2) an opportunity to find employment commensurate with training, opportunity which less developed societies often do not offer; 3) a lack of professional fulfillment at home due to inadequate facilities; and 4) poor planning and the failure of governments to take effective measures which would improve conditions for professionals who remain in their native country.

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Newman Group Offers Interfaith Religious Course

Akron, Ohio — (NC) — The Newman Apostolate at Akron University this fall dropped its regular religious courses for Catholics in favor of interfaith sessions which will be taught by a nun, priests and ministers.

Classes are being held three times weekly in the university student center, which also is a break with the past. Previously, sessions were held in the Newman Center, and while open to all, were attended mostly by Catholics. The course is also being sponsored by the (Protestant) Christian Campus Fellowship.

Theme of the course will be, "What does it take to be human?" Dialog sessions are designed for those who want to front our age in the "realm of love and sexuality so that a path to walk can be discovered."

The course does not attempt, the statement emphasized, to discard traditions, and pointed out that Mass is offered daily for Catholic students and faculty in the Newman Center, where a resident priest is available for counsel and discussion rooms are open.

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