



A Century later

A statue of Abraham Lincoln surveys yet uncleared rubble which resulted from one of Newark's riots. Although more than a century has elapsed since Lincoln's death, the fight for black rights is not over (RNS)

Back Welfare Bill, Catholics Urged

Washington — (NC) — Catholics are being mobilized to urge passage of the welfare reform bill now before Congress.

The bill proposes establishment of a family assistance program. If approved, it will in effect provide for a guaranteed minimum income for the nation's poor.

Plans for Catholic support of the legislation were mapped out at a meeting April 13 here attended by representatives of the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) and its affiliate organizations.

Bishop Joseph L. Bernardin, general secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference; Dr. R. H. Edwin Espy, general secretary, National Council of Churches and Rabbi Henry Siegman, executive vice president, Synagogue Council of America, support the bill.

Msgr. Lawrence J. Corcoran, secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC) has also urged local charities directors to support the family assistance plan.

The April 13 meeting, called by John E. Cosgrove, director of the USCC Department of Social Development, set up a co-operative plan of action which would include other departments of the USCC and its affiliates, such as the National Councils of Catholic Men and Women.

Msgr. Corcoran, Cosgrove and Father James McHugh, director of the USCC's family life division, were chosen to put together a program of action.

Those attending agreed unanimously on the urgency of passing the bill.

Cosgrove called the bill "monumental legislation," explaining that it would provide a minimum base of \$1600 annual income per family of four. He said this amount is inadequate, but added the bill establishes the principle of a minimum income which could be raised at a future time with additional legislation.

He noted opposition to the bill would come from liberals who "want a perfect bill" and from conservatives who "want people to work for a living" and who will complain the plan would cost too much.

Father McHugh said he hoped the U.S. bishops meeting in San Francisco April 21-23, "will take a precise stand on this bill," and that all organizations in the Church would make their impact felt to promote its passage.

However, he noted, the most effective influence on congressmen is an individual's letter written on a plain piece of paper in the writer's own handwriting.

The bill, H.R. 16311, has been reported out of the House Ways and Means Committee and is expected to be approved by the House. Trouble, however, is anticipated in the Senate and its Finance Committee which is made up of a majority of senators from rural states.

The program allows a family of four with an income up to \$720 to receive a federal payment of \$1,600 a year (\$500 each for the first two family members, \$300 for each additional member). States would supplement the federal payment.

The family could earn up to \$3,920 before becoming ineligible for assistance. The amount a family could earn before becoming ineligible would vary with the size of the family.

This plan would replace the present Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and includes for the first time coverage of poor families regardless of the work status of the father. States would not be required to supplement payments to the working poor.

The plan also provides uniform, nationwide eligibility requirements and payment procedures, both for the basic federal family assistance plan and the state supplementary payments.

Euthanasia Defeated... For Now

London — (RNS) — "Voluntary" euthanasia was shouted down by a chorus of "no, no, no" as Parliament rejected Dr. Hugh Gray's measure that would have allowed a person to exercise his own choice of life or death.

Normally Parliament votes quite formally, no matter what issue is before it. In this case, however, its members didn't think it necessary to spend the time. One critic noted the scope of the opposition and claimed the politics of survival may have been a factor.

According to a newsman, "It was probably because of the closeness of the general election that the bill's sympathizers did not press it to a vote, so that they did not become identified with a controversial cause."

Dr. Gray, a Labor party member, offered the fourth bill on mercy killing to be presented to Parliament. Its predecessors sustained similar defeat.

In arguing for his measure, Dr. Gray said that individuals, through a voluntary declaration, should be able to choose whether they wish to die or not.

Norman St. John-Stevas, Conservative Party member and a Roman Catholic writer and broadcaster, disagreed. He said the bill would allow one person to kill another, albeit at the other's request.

"I believe it is ultimately God, not man, who is the disposer of human life," he said. "In the last analysis, we are the created, not the Creator."

St. John-Stevas had earlier warned the Human Rights Society of the "terrifying pressures unscrupulous relations could bring to bear on the sick and aged if voluntary euthanasia became law."

He asked how long it would be if Dr. Gray's bill became law, before supporters of euthanasia began urging compulsory euthanasia for the old, the sick, the mentally and physically handicapped and, "indeed, anyone who can be presented as a burden to society."

Nation's Bishops Open Meeting In San Francisco

By JOHN R. SULLIVAN
(NC News Service)

San Francisco — Ecumenical harmony and intramural differences will likely be the major characteristics of this year's spring meeting of the American Catholic hierarchy.

When the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) opened their meeting yesterday at the Fairmont Hotel here, two significant events were expected to occur:

- The staff of the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs will report that talks with Episcopalian and Lutheran theologians have resulted in substantial agreement on the three churches' views of the Eucharist.

- But the BCEIA staff quickly notes that this agreement will result in intercommunion only after more study by all churches.

- The U.S. bishops give no indication of meeting the deadline set by the National Federation of Priests' Councils (NFPC) to come up with a "response" to what the federation calls unjust treatment of 19 dissenting Washington, D.C., priests disciplined by Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle for opposing the papal birth control encyclical.

The priests' federation has promised to hold public demonstrations unless that deadline is met.

Possible result, according to most people close to the situation: another demonstration at least, and possibly an attempt — made by other groups at the November 1969 meeting — to enter the meetings forcibly.

Although the bishops will undoubtedly have to deal with unscheduled dissent, they have given themselves a packed

schedule of other matters to discuss. Among them:

- Bishop Francis J. Mugavero of Brooklyn will ask them to approve creation of a National Coalition for Social and Economic Development. The coalition which has its roots in the November 1969 meeting, at which the bishops agreed to raise \$50 million for social action and anti-poverty efforts would be the fundraising and distribution organization for that money.

- Religion texts — the cause of considerable public furor a year ago — will be discussed and the bishops will be asked to approve a tentative list of criteria for judging their worth.

- The bishops will probably approve establishment of a permanent "Newman Center for the Study of Campus Ministry" — a permanent research and training center to be located in Boston. The National Newman Foundation has agreed to support the center for three years. First-year cost: \$118,260.

The format of the bishops meeting will be substantially the same as that introduced last November: seven groups of bishops, assigned by geographical region, were to discuss much of the business, then report their findings for final action. Previously, the bishops had met in a single, 215-man body for all business.

This year Archbishop Darden will propose an extension of the format: across-the-board decentralization of the bishops' conference, under which regional groups would hold regular meetings. At present, the NCCB meets only twice each year.

Another proposal for a format change will also be discussed: the opening of at least some of the NCCB sessions to direct press coverage.

Bishops Tell Rhodesia

No Compromise on Racism

Salisbury — (RNS) — In a followup to their recent pastoral letter, Rhodesia's five Roman Catholic bishops have reiterated their uncompromising opposition to the country's new "apartheid-style" (racial segregation) constitution, with its Land Tenure Act.

A special 56-page booklet, issued April 7, declared that the Church "will not compromise its principles or its conscience" in its freedom to deal with all people irrespective of race, and added, "in saying this, the Church, like its Founder, is prepared to lose all so as to gain all."

There are about 35,000 white Catholics among the 230,000 white citizens of Rhodesia, who control almost all wealth and power in the country. Among the more than 4,500,000 Rhodesian blacks (mostly Bantus) there are some 450,000 black Catholics. Only 8,300 blacks are registered to vote.

The Land Tenure Act, which will go into effect in five months, divides the land into European, or white, areas totaling 44.9 million acres and African, or black, areas totaling 45.2 million acres. Observers say the law is so framed in spirit and intent that it gives government authorities discretion to prohibit interracial worship, interracial education, and black residence in white areas.

The Catholic booklet said,

"The government, in direct contradiction of Christian teaching, has entrenched separation and discrimination," and warned, "The Church refuses to be forced to behave as if it approved of or acquiesced in racial discrimination."

With the notable exception of the Dutch Reformed Church, other religious denominations have also expressed opposition to the government racial policies.

Last March, Anglican Bishop Kenneth Skelton, of Matabeleland, asserted, "If our nation's rulers pursue a policy which is at variance with our belief in God, we have no choice but to resist."

Is Pope Planning Visit to Poland?

Rome — (RNS) — Reports that a leading Vatican prelate, Archbishop Sergio Pignedoli, will go to Poland shortly intensified speculation here that Pope Paul is planning a visit to the Polish people.

Italian Radio said that Archbishop Pignedoli, a close collaborator of the Pope, stated that his visit was connected with his duties as secretary of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, which directs Church mission activities throughout the world.