

# Many 'Firsts' Recorded at Bishops' Meeting

Francisco — (RNS) — Generally speaking, the nationally speaking, the Catholic bishops may come up with a new record "firsts" during their deliberations here.

Specifically they wound up with an annual meeting with perhaps their most stinging attack on abortion, with their most optimistic pronouncement on ecumenical relations with the strongest move toward responsibility in the area, and with their first call for widespread anti-poverty efforts.

Young groups of Catholic natives and liberals alike led the sessions for "too big" or "too little" progress in a variety of Church issues, with the bishops' news conference throughout the meeting drawing attention to such elements as:

"A significant development in the progress of dialogue between Catholic, Angli-

can and Lutheran theologians on the topics of "reconciliation" and "inter-communion."

• A joint statement by the more than 200 bishops rejecting abortion reform as "an unspeakable crime" that strips the unborn child from all legal protection.

• A strong plea to American Catholics—hierarchy, clergy, religious and laity — to fulfill their "specific roles" in the life of the Church in a "new way" and work for the success of a national pastoral council that would share responsibility for the life of the Church.

• A pledge of continued efforts by a Catholic bishops' committee to work for the unionization of farm workers throughout the country.

• And, a promise to begin next Fall a \$50 million anti-poverty crusade which included a call to U.S. Catholics to rise to new heights in displaying a sense of mission toward the human family.

The meeting, threatened with

large-scale disruptions was relatively quiet. Aside from a demonstration by a pro-abortion women's group, only three news conferences by dissident Catholic groups were held. They ranged from mild to caustic but caused no particular sensation.

A liaison committee of bishops met with various dissenting groups, but the main work of the sessions went on without disruption.

In condemning new trends in the liberalization of abortion laws, the bishops characterized the reforms as "extremely regrettable." They said that the absence of legal restraint promotes abortion as a convenient way for a mother to terminate both the life of the child and her responsibilities as its mother.

Citing the advancement of ecumenical dialogue, principally through the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, the bishops said discussion is moving to "quite an advanced stage" in areas of "com-

plete reconciliation" and "full inter-communion."

Bishop Charles Helmsing of Kansas City, Mo., said the ecumenical committee told the bishops that basic agreements on the meaning of the Eucharist and on the ministry had been reached with the Anglicans and tentatively with the Lutherans.

It was also indicated that discussions on affiliation between the Catholic Church and the National Council of Churches, which encompasses some 33 Protestant and Orthodox church bodies in the U.S., are continuing.

The bishops gave "enthusiastic" support to unionization efforts of farm workers in the U.S. and wholly endorsed continuing involvement of an ad hoc committee on the California farm-labor dispute.

In announcing their plans for a \$50 million anti-poverty campaign, the bishops said they had utmost "confidence in their flocks" not only to "keep the faith" but to rise to the chal-

lenge in meeting the needs of the nation's poor.

In other actions, the bishops agreed to discourage priests from seeking public office, but they are not expected to take any action against clergymen already running for elective office.

The bishops expressed their gratitude to President Nixon following the President's announcement that he was setting up a commission to study ways the government might give financial assistance to non-public schools.

In a second wire to Washington, the bishops urged support of the U.S. Senate for the House - approved "family-assistance" bill now under consideration.

Both the secular and religious press have put pressure on the bishops to open at least some of their deliberations to the public and several prelates expressed the belief that the closed-door policy would be modified.



During a press conference in San Francisco Archbishop Joseph Bernardin, general secretary of the U.S. Bishops; Charles Tilton, vice president of a panel on the formation of a pastoral council; U.S. Bishops president John Cardinal Dearden of Detroit and Archbishop Philip Hannan of New Orleans report on establishment of a pastoral council. Cardinal Dearden said such a group would be a uniting and harmonious force. (RNS)

## U.S. Bishops Support Family Aid Program

Washington — (NC) — The U.S. bishops have added their support to welfare reform legislation by urging Congress to enact a family assistance program.

Passage of such legislation, now pending in the Senate, would in effect establish a guaranteed income for the nation's poor.

The bishops urged "prompt enactment of the Family Assistance Act or some similar family assistance program." They also urged, however, "that the minimum dollar amount of \$1,600 for a family of four be substantially raised."

The bishops criticized the present welfare system, including the Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. It has "proven wholly inadequate to provide either a decent standard of living or incentive to the 'beneficiary' families," the resolution said. It called the system "in many cases counter-productive and destructive of family life."

Their resolution urged "strong and clear federal guidelines to assure equitable administration" of the Family Assistance program. It said that if employment by the head of a household is required for a family to benefit under the act, "it is important that such employment be truly suitable."

The legislation would provide for the first time a federal minimum benefit for all needy families with children. The bill provides for an annual rate of \$500 for each of the first two members of the family, and \$300 for each additional member, or \$1600 for a family of four.

The father of the family would no longer need to be absent for the family to qualify—a stipulation which some states put on the present program and which, its critics say, encourages desertion. Instead, the head of the family would register for employment or training for employment to qualify.

This means that the "working poor" would be helped, increasing the role of eligible beneficiaries by some 13 million.

## Bishops Back Catholic Press

San Francisco—(NC)—America's Catholic bishops gave an unequivocal and unanimous expression of support to the nation's Catholic press at the semi-annual meeting here.

Adopted without dissent, the bishops' resolution acknowledged, "We are especially encouraged by the positive contribution to human understanding and to the knowledge of the Church provided by the diocesan newspapers under our jurisdiction and at the same time conscious of their journalistic responsibilities to all who read them."

Expressing their "earnest hope that the diocesan newspapers of this country will be welcomed into every Catholic home," the bishops stated that:

"As bishops of Christ's Church, charged with the continuing dissemination of Christ's essential message to the world, we rely strongly on the Catholic press."

## Architect Replies to Moratorium Plea

Charlottesville, Va. — (RNS) — A proposal for a moratorium on church and synagogue construction "until every family has a decent dwelling," made by the architect at an architectural conference here, has drawn a reply.

Eugene J. Lipman of the firm of Skidmore, Peck, and Kay, Washington, D.C., made the proposal on the first day of the four-day 31st National Conference on Religious Architecture, and Robert L. Durham, a Seattle architect, made his reply at the final session.

Lipman proposed "that new buildings be undertaken only in religious institutions in existing cities, in suburbia, or in planned cities until every family has a standard family dwelling in place. In the rest of the country, the standard family dwelling in place has been replaced by a substandard one."

In his reply, Durham said:

"To say that we should build new churches until everyone is decently housed is like saying we should not give attention to education until social justice is achieved to all people."

The environment cannot be improved by the church building out of poor buildings. Churches are an ineffective tool to carry out the basic mission of the church, which is to care for the poor.

"New churches must be built, for the children are already born who cannot be adequately served by existing poorly designed and worn out buildings."

Durham said the architect, as a layman, must be involved not only in establishing the commitment of the church but in demanding the extension of social justice.

"However," he went on, "as a professional in his relationship to his client, the architect must be listening and paying attention to his client whether rich or poor."

## Jersey Bishops Urge More Parochial Aid

Trenton, N.J. — (RNS) — Catholic bishops in New Jersey have urged the Legislature to give every consideration "to a more realistic higher amount" of state aid than the \$9.5 million recommended by Gov. William T. Cahill.

The bishops called the governor's proposal of \$9.5 million "distressingly small in view of the overwhelming needs . . . Each of us, and all of us, face agonizing decisions, within the months ahead, as to the allocation of funds, assets and personnel to meet the needs of our school system."

Other bodies, however, have responsibilities in the school funding area and are not likely to completely quit the field and leave all future problems to the Fleischmann group.

The Legislature has three educational committees: one in the Senate, one in the Assembly and a Joint Committee. No matter what the Fleischmann recommendations are these committees are charged with coming up with plans of their own to meet education needs in the 1970s.

The Board of Regents and the Education Department, while

fully cooperating with the Fleischmann study group, are unlikely to stop their own people from planning for the years ahead.

The danger is, that the popular mind will confuse the governor's group with all government groups and feel only one report is or will be forthcoming.

Whatever the recommendations of the Fleischmann Commission (and at present it is just beginning its study) assemblymen and senators will have bills ready for January introduction; the governor's staff will undoubtedly have some

program bills of their own relating to education; the Regents will be making recommendations and the State Education Department is even now drafting proposed legislation for introduction next year.

The governor's commission has a responsibility to the governor. To fulfill its mandate it must come up with intelligent solutions to the problem of funding quality education in the state. The other organizations: Regents, legislature, education department etc. have their own responsibility directly to the people.

## Many Groups Studying State School Aid

By DICK DOWD

Special to the Courier-Journal

Albany — There is no question that Gov. Rockefeller will be depending heavily on the Fleischmann School Funding Study Commission to come up with practical answers to the many facets of school funding for both public and the non-public schools.

Ample evidence of his intent is the \$650,000 included in his supplemental budget (passed in the closing days of the Legislature) for a year's work for the group.