

Editorial An Almost Event

It didn't happen but it almost did and this gives rise to some gnawing doubts about how things are being done in Washington.

We have a president whose opposition to abortion on demand has been widely noted and which has given heart to pro-lifers. But despite his sentiment and notwithstanding that he is indeed a powerful chief executive, a Supreme Court, that supposedly fits his philosophy, rules that liberalized abortion be the law of the land.

Also to be considered in this paradoxical web is the department of Health, Education and Welfare which is cutting back programs intended to help the poor of the country. Msgr. Lawrence J. Corcoran, executive secretary of Catholic Charities, told Religious News Service that more than 200 programs for 10,000 needy families will be adversely affected by the HEW plans.

Now when the President wants to get tough about budget HEW goes along with him. But this same HEW came very close to sending a "film promoting legalized abortion" to schools, colleges and organizations requesting it.

The plan was scotched at the last minute after a viewing by HEW top officials, according to United Press International. But the project had proceeded to the point where it had been promised to more than 850 organizations and educational systems and HEW had to explain to them that it would not, after all, be distributing the film.

The film, a report on the findings of the President's Commission on Population Control, was virtually the same one which three television networks rejected but which was run by Public Broadcasting Services outlets.

Costing \$170,000, it was produced privately, according to UPI, and HEW had intended to buy and distribute it.

It didn't happen but the fact that it almost did makes one wonder how the President wields his authority — he seems able to "get tough" with the poor, but stands aside on the pro-life issues.

No Polish Joke

Anybody prone to telling "Polish jokes" should sit down and read about Nicholas Copernicus who was born 500 years ago in a little Polish town he called "the most remote corner of the world."

But from this out-of-the-way vantage point, and before the telescope was invented, he took a look at the world that eventually changed history. He was the first man to challenge the belief that the earth formed the central point of the universe. His influence on the thinking of scientists following him, such as Galileo, Kepler and Newton, is immeasurable.

But, as Religious News Service points out, Copernicus achieved in many other fields. For instance, he was a physician, an economist, an authority on Canon Law and served as secretary to his uncle, a Catholic bishop.

Unfortunately, Copernicus' ideas fell into some disrepute for a spell, but now all recognize his genius and celebrations are taking place around the world to commemorate his birth.

In his name all "Polish joke" aficionados should call it quits, for at least the next 500 years.

Letters to Editor

Ah, those letters to the editor. We love them. There are two main reasons for this affection. First, this page provides a forum for the thoughts of concerned Catholics of all stripes throughout the diocese. Second, the letters constitute one of the best-read features in this or any newspaper.

Lately we have had a surplus of letters and appreciate this since it is an indicator that people are reading the Courier more closely and also they are forming opinions on Church operations.

Please excuse us if your letters have appeared later than you may have expected; we are trying to get as many different writers on these pages as possible. Try to limit the number of letters you offer and also to observe the rules printed elsewhere on this page. This will give more readers a chance to express their opinions.

Be clear, concise, stick to your point and practice the good taste that makes your opinion more effective. But, most of all, "Don't forget to write."

Opinion

Arm-Twisting On Letter?

Editor:

Re: the Bishop and Priests Statement.

Did you know that the original letter sent to the priests had a postcard enclosed (for convenience, of course) which the priest could use to return his signature?

Did you see the February 1973 issue of Director of Communications James Noonan's "Pastoral Comments" which repeated the statement (with a tear-off to be returned with signature) because some priests had not received the first letter and our Director of Communications noted that the response to date was "overwhelming"? Signing was not mandatory — but the two items mentioned have the earmarks of subtle arm twisting (if you pardon the mixed metaphor).

Rev. Eugene H. McFarland
St. Patrick's Church
Macedon, N.Y., 14502.

A Role For Deacons

Editor:

Bishop Hogan's words about "Deacons," temporary and permanent, [Courier-Journal 2-28-73] left me with this conviction. Today's needs are probably not going to be met with the kind of service which junctioned so well in the primitive Church of the Apostolic Age.

Haven't laymen and women shown that they are competent to distribute Holy Communion to our churches today? Would it be at all contrary to the practice of the Church to have the laity perform marriages "in the name of the Church"? Can it be scandalous for Catholic men and women to bring Viaticum to the dying, and to officiate at funeral and burial services? If the laity can share these sacramental duties with "deacons," who will never be ordained priests or bishops, is there any realistic need for such "deacons"? Here, I am assuming that competence and aptitude are the criteria to distinguish laity from deacons, a matter of "ex opere operato," not "ex opere operantis."

When the Twelve Apostles (AA 6: 1-6) sought full time for "prayer and ministry of the word," they had the community appoint deacons to serve the tables of both the Greek-speaking and the Jewish-Christian widows. In our day is it not possible and necessary for the Church to add to the usual duties of deacons



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two others, namely, prime teachers and preachers? Make deacons unique apologists for, defenders of the faith, if you will. They will become in the eyes of the world and its ears, too, instructors in the Holy Scriptures, demonstrating that Jesus was the Messiah, the world's only Saviour. Preaching in the early days of Christianity was intended for non-believers. Non-believers are more likely to be found on street corners, in bars, in the jails and hospitals and the like than in front of church pulpits. So let the new deacons be trained to go forth and catch the fish as Peter would have them do.

In short if deacons are to bring a new character and responsibility to their office, let them "try men's souls" in this soul-destroying world!

John J.A. Overlander
201 Wimbledon Road
Rochester, N.Y.

Professionals' Defended

Editor:

Regarding Father Cuddy's column, 3/7/73, we would like to make the following comments:

1) We do not consider the presence of "professionalism" in Religious Education and the local church as "family" to be mutually exclusive.

2) We are grateful to the Courier-Journal staff for past coverage of our efforts and meetings. Evidently, there is further need for clarification of our role in the teaching mission of the Church.

The Association of
Religious Educators,
Executive Committee

Time to Fix Injustices

Editor:

"The time of Indian justice is here," the last line in Father William O'Connell's Special Report, "Why Wounded Knee," March 14, is so true. The Indians have become unwilling wards of our government, which refuses to let them lead their own lives. The injustices perpetrated on the American Indians for over 200 years include broken treaties, stolen land, deliberate massacres, starvation, and finally wards of the government. They were forced to live on the worst unproductive land in this country, called reservations, and yet, even today the white men still find ways to take the land away from the Indians.

The State JayNcees adopted a statewide project named "American Indian Awareness" in October 1971. Most chapters throughout the state are just starting this project, because it has taken over a year to do research, compile facts, and to get all facets of this project ready for operation. Letters are being sent to high officials to have the BIA investigated and abolished to be replaced by a Federal Indian Commission responsible to the President of the U.S.; letters are being sent to major motion picture studios and television networks to produce documentaries on the Indian way of life, his culture, his religion, and his contributions to this country, and to cast Indians in Indian roles. These are just two facets of this project; there is much more to be done and I feel, with public support behind us, we can restore to his rightful place the proud American Indian.

If anyone is interested in helping with this project and the American Indians, please contact your local JayNcee chapter or if you haven't a chapter, write to me.

Jane O'Mara
Waterloo JayNcee
17 Clark St.
Waterloo, N.Y. 13165

Classmates Are Sought

Editor:

The Class of 1938 of Aquinas Institute will hold a 35th reunion May 18 at the Party House. Of the 213 in the original class the committee has accounted for all but 17 and is anxious to have information on them:

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Arthur J. Boland, John J. Butler, Harold J. Carbone, Charles R. Carman, Charles R. Cook, John W. Conway, Thomas J. Dunbar, Charles J. Foss, John D. Koehler, Robert H. Koehler, Armand J. Lamay, Robert A. Orlando, Joseph A. Ritz, Mary A. Ryan, John F. Scancarella, Ralph E. Slayton, Roy C. Walker should call co-chairmen Peter Cody at 328-6843 or Joe Kuder at 436-5725.

Bernard H. Florack
169 Brookview Drive
Rochester, N.Y. 14617

Opinions to the editor should be addressed: Letter to the Editor, Courier-Journal, Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced. Names and addresses should be included. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

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