

# More Opinions

## China Social Issues Aired

Editor:

In a letter to these columns of Jan. 22, Mr. Robert Bart suggested that China is a slave state. A thoughtful answer requires recognizing the complexity of freedom. We are slowly accepting the unfortunate laws of social organization — that when we choose to live together in society and share the benefits of cooperative activity, we must give up some freedoms to gain others. We have given up our freedoms to drive on the left side of the road, to sell adulterated food, to shout "Fire!" in a crowded room, etc. etc. because we believe we can obtain other benefits and new freedoms. We can argue about the desirability of any particular exchange of freedoms, but it is hard to deny that we always face these kinds of choices.

In China it is true that people's activities are highly organized and closely regulated. Mr. Bart, myself and a great many Americans would feel lack of some freedoms if we were living in China. However, we must remember that the Chinese perspective on freedom is different from ours. Most Chinese, especially older peasants, are primarily concerned about the stability of food supplies. They remember the periodic famines which used to punctuate their lives, kill members of their families, and totally disrupt all social relations. They remember that when poor families were starving it was common to sell off children (especially daughters) as slaves to the wealthy landlords.

Many old peasants remember the physical abuse they suffered when they could not pay the rent on their farm land — often over 50 per cent of the harvest. Freedom for the rich often meant slavery for the poor. In some regions of China, such as Tibet, formal outright slavery was the basic pattern of social organization. Chinese ideas of freedom are also intertwined with complex values of obligation to the family, clan, and community. The ideas of personal freedom and individuality are greatly limited by these ideas of obligation. Older people in China also remember the humiliation of watching their country decline from the "central kingdom" of the world to the "sick man of Asia."

To achieve freedom from hunger and from exploitation by the rich and to regain national pride, most Chinese people are willing to accept limitations on some other freedoms. The most important are private ownership of land and commerce, freedom to travel, freedom to make career choices, and certain freedoms of political expression and association. Of course not everyone in China is pleased with the balance that has been struck between freedom and regulation. I would guess however, that the vast majority of the Chinese people do support the present balance.

Perhaps in the future this will change. As the Chinese economy improves, as famine becomes a vague memory of the past instead of the crisp memory of the living, as humiliation in international affairs is ended, it is possible that some Chinese people may desire different types of freedoms.

It is difficult for us to relate to this preference of the Chinese. We have not experienced a century of foreign domination, however. Moreover, our economy

is so rich that we have never faced the massive disaster of extensive famine. Throughout Asia, however, where the normal situation barely supports life and where bad weather can spell death for millions, peasants place extraordinary emphasis on the security of life, especially in years with bad weather. As unemployment grows in the United States and as inflation continues, perhaps we can understand (regardless of whether we agree with) the choice to emphasize economic security. When we think of Asia, we must be most careful not to impose our own cultural values on other people. We must give them the freedom to choose freedoms in a manner consistent with their own historical experiences and values. We should not be surprised or disappointed if their choices are different from ours.

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## Church Not 'For Men Only'

Editor:

I don't know to whom to address my grievance. A pile of dust named Ezekiel? The Church? J.S. Paluch Publishing Company? The latter would seem to be off the hook since "with Ecclesiastical Approbation" is on the inside cover. That brings me back to my church that allowed the printing of a passage to be read on Easter to the brothers and sisters in Christ the reading, Ez. 36/16-28: "In my sight their conduct was like the defilement of a menstruous woman." For me this was the proverbial "straw that broke" and left me raging around inside my skin for the remainder of the service. I really (naively?) thought the days of sitting in the pew hearing ancient text put woman in that certain secondary light had passed on for good.

Is the Church aware of the great number of women, intelligent, religious women, who will no longer attend formal church services because they can no longer bear to see and hear male dominated liturgy. We see men act as ushers, priests with their young boys, serving the Mass. To be sure most parishes have their token female lector but doesn't anyone wonder what we (and more importantly our young) are thinking out there as a man seats us, takes our offering, passes our bulletin, leads our prayers, holds the paten at Communion and then bids us on our way afterwards at the door.

I guess any cleric could try to argue me back through history, all the way to the apostles, rationalizing the leadership of males. But is just isn't good enough any more. Tradition is the answer and tradition is rooted in humanity with its certain prejudices. Christ left His legacy to all of us. There was never any divine proclamation "for men only."

Half of the Christian community has too weak a voice and too faint a visibility. I speak for many: the vaguely discontent; the restless; the frustrated; and the very angry; and for our true Christian brothers who also care that women stand off to the side.

We ask, pray for, insist on change.

Sharon S. Mills  
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# News from Hornell

## RETREATS

**Hornell** — The women of St. Ann's may take advantage of retreats scheduled for May 16-18 and June 6-8. They begin about 9 p.m. Fri. with registration at 7:30 p.m. and last until Sunday lunch. The usual offering for the full retreat is \$30. The theme this year is "Deep Personal Renewal in Christ." Interested women may contact Josephine Ciancaglini (324-2167) or Virginia Argentieri (324-6318).

## HD SPEAKER

**Bath** — Sister Mary Kruckow, chairman of Human Development for Steuben/Livingston Region, spoke at all the Masses at St. Mary's, April 5 and 6 on the efforts to combat poverty in the region.

## FIRST COMMUNION

**Bath** — All the children in the First Communion Class at St. Mary's will receive Holy Communion in a body at the 10 a.m. Mass, Sunday, May 4 followed by a breakfast.

## MINISTERS NAMED

**Bath** — People at St. Mary's given the privilege of distributing Holy Communion to the faithful are Sister Carol Walforst, RSM; Sister Joanne Cullen, RSM; Sister Patricia, RSM; Francis Bierwiler and James DeRossiers.

## INVITATION

**Dansville** — Choir rehearsals at St. Mary's are held on Tuesdays from 7 to 8 p.m. in the church. High school students are invited to come and participate.

## SOCIETY SPEAKER

**Bath** — Father John S. Hayes, pastor of St. Patrick's Church, Aurora and St. Patrick's Church, Savannah, spoke at the recent meeting of St. Mary's Rosary and Altar Society. Father Hayes is known to area residents as former chaplain at the Veterans Administration Center.

## EARLY ED

**Dansville** — An Early Childhood Education Program for four year olds is being offered at St. Mary's. Two two-hour sessions will be held each week for a period of 36 weeks. The cost is \$3 per week. Persons interested may contact the school office, 987-6800.

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