

**The Church 1975**



Fr. Andrew Greeley

Msgr. George Higgins, I gather, is angry at me because of my criticism of the bicentennial program of the American bishops. Msgr. Higgins is one of the heroes of my youth and has had more influence on my thinking through the years than almost anyone I know. The decisions I made about social science training, about professional competence and about journalism were all heavily influenced by his example and advice.

To make matters worse, his recent attack on me was, I think, both vicious and dishonest.

He takes me to task for not telling my readers about the big turn-around in the bicentennial program which occurred at the "hearings" in San Antonio. Why, he demands, have I been critical even after those hearings?

In fact, I have said nothing at all about the San Antonio hearings and could not have done so before Msgr. Higgins' column, which was written only a few days after the meeting.

I would assume that under the astute chairmanship of Archbishop Peter Gerety the San Antonio hearings were skillfully and intelligently run. As a man who spent a good deal of his priestly ministry in an inner city parish, Gerety is hardly the kind of person to take kindly to the suggestion from one of the authors of the bicentennial program that there is something unchristian about large churches and schools in the inner city.

But why didn't Msgr. Higgins give me a chance to say something pro or con before accusing me of being critical of those meetings?

To make matters worse, he strongly hints that I should have been at the San Antonio meeting sharing my insights and skills with the others who were there. This is just plain unfair. Msgr. Higgins knows full well why I wasn't there: I wasn't invited. This does not upset me. The committee can invite whomever it wants. But to find yourself criticized for not participating in something to which you were not asked is to know what Alice felt like in Wonderland.

Msgr. Higgins also knows that I have spent many hours in informal discussion with some of the bicentennial personnel (including one foggy landing at an airport after six aborted attempts to get the plane on the ground). I have no way of knowing whether these conversations were of any help, but it is unfair to suggest that I was sulking and refusing to cooperate.

The monsignor is prepared to admit that the bicentennial got off to a troubled start, but now asserts that it is on the right track and blames me for not moderating my criticisms of the initial weaknesses. This comment strikes me as being singularly graceless. I don't know whether my criticism of the "liberty and justice for all" mess had any impact on modifying the direction of the bicentennial. But I was the only one in the Catholic liberal camp that even criticized it in public. Msgr. Higgins remained quite silent. Then he comes along after the changes are made and blames me for being critical — and shrill.

Dan Berrigan only became

shrill in Msgr. Higgins' book when he attacked Israel.

For all the improvement in the bicentennial program under Bishop Gerety I still see no evidence that professionally competent experts (like Pat Moynihan) have been invited to participate. Robert Coles was invited to San Antonio at the last minute and couldn't come. That's the way we do things in the Church: we try to get important people at the last minute.

Msgr. Higgins is secretary for research of the USCC. I must in all honesty ask him whether the half-baked documents purporting to be research efforts — the bicentennial guide, the poverty booklet, the synodal statement — which have come from the USCC-NCCB in the last year and a half — would be acceptable by any trade union in the country? Would any union worth its salt be so reluctant to call in professionally competent consultants? Do these documents represent the professional skills for which he, has always stood? Obviously he was not personally responsible for any of them.

But if being secretary for research means anything, it should mean that you blow the whistle when bad research begins to appear on your agency letterhead. I must also ask whether he has lifted a finger to see that the bungling amateurism of the bicentennial guide has been supplemented by any sound research documents on the subjects to be discussed.

He demands that I repudiate the support of my critique of the bicentennial program from the "Wanderer," the "Sunday Visitor" and Archbishop Dwyer.

For two decades Msgr. Higgins has taken stands on trade union matters that are identical with stands taken by socialists and Communists (and are in most cases stands I support). I cannot recall him feeling the need to repudiate support for such stands from far-left types. Indeed I am sure he would have said that those who accused him of taking the same stand as the Communists were indulging in guilt by association.

Or, to call it by its right name, McCarthyism.

Now I find that he practices McCarthyism in reverse against me.

That makes me very sad.

**Deaths**

**E. F. Winterkorn**

The Mass of Christian Burial for Edmund F. Winterkorn was celebrated last evening of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. His son, Father Robert J. Winterkorn, pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Spencerport, was principal celebrant.

Mr. Winterkorn, of Avenue D, died April 26, 1975.

He retired in 1965 from Rochester Products, where he had been a general foreman in various departments. At the time of his retirement it was said that he had worked in Rochester plants of General Motors longer than anyone else — more than 45 years. He started in 1919 at Northeast Electric Company, which became Delco Appliance Division.

Mr. Winterkorn was a member of the OLPH Holy Name Society, the St. George Benevolent Society of St. Andrew's parish, Commandery 40, Knights of St. John, the Nocturnal Adoration Society, Daily Mass League and Men's Retreat League.

Survivors include his widow, Marion Staub Winterkorn; another son, Edward F.; three daughters, Mrs. John J. (Carolann) Leonard of Scottsville, Mrs. H. Joseph (Marilyn) Weber and Miss Nancy Winterkorn; 13 grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

**CDA Honors Deceased at Special Mass**

**Watkins Glen** — The Past Regents' Club of the Catholic Daughters of America of the Diocese of Rochester observed a Memorial Mass for the deceased CDA members at St. Mary's Church here on Saturday, April 25. Mrs. Charles Ward of Court Lourdes 628 of Watkins Glen was chairman for the day.

Following Mass, a luncheon was served at the Glen Motor Inn with attorney Jack Callanan as

the guest speaker on the topic of "Religious Influence in Our Lives."

The Rochester Past Regents under the chairmanship of Mrs. William E. Crosby of Court Our Lady of the Cenacle 1139, will host the annual meeting on Sept. 27, 1975 at a location to be announced.

Special guest and past regent of Court Nativity of Our Lady 931 of Brockport, now state regent of

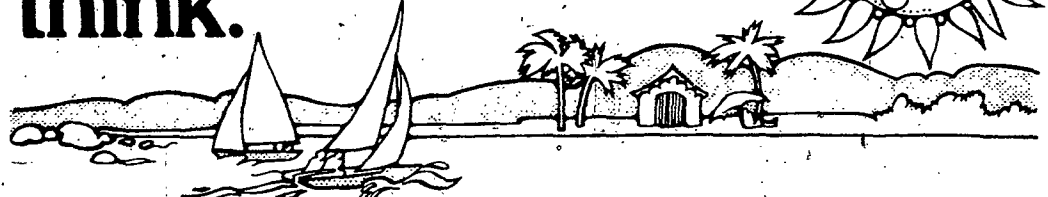
the Catholic Daughters of America, Mrs. Mary Donahue, welcomed all.

**FURNITURE**

The Catholic Committee on Scouting is asking for hardwood furniture, preferably maple, to furnish the chaplain's office at Camp Massawepie. Persons wishing to donate such furniture have been asked to call the Catholic Committee at 254-0438.

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