

Editorial

Survival

The Commission of World Justice and Peace of the Brooklyn diocese recently excoriated the U.S. defense budget which, it said, relegates all other national financial priorities to a back seat.

The commission pointed out that the present administration, following the dictates of those gone by, is asking Congress for \$254.2 billion in the 1976 budget. "Of this amount," the commission said, "the military will receive 54 per cent, human resources 22 per cent, physical resources 10 per cent, and all others 14 per cent."

The commission put it another way. In 1976, it will cost the average American family \$2,485 for military programs, \$301 for health, \$258 for education and social services, and \$107 for community and regional development.

Startling? Probably not. We have heard such figures before and still abide by them. Similarly we probably can accept the possibility that in the coming year we will spend \$1 billion on one military project, the B1 bomber, while all medical research in the world amounts to \$4 billion a year.

We tend to disregard criticisms of such policy when they come from religious sources. We categorize them subconsciously as pious utterances from those who really don't understand the score.

So it should be edifying to note that at the recent meeting of the nation's mayors last week, several big city leaders begged for help, saying their metropolises cannot exist without great transfusions of federal aid. The administration has been advised to find the money by paring the defense budget.

In this case, the rejoinder will be "politics." So we will continue to spend billions to "defend," for instance, Detroit, whose mayor will tell you is at this time almost beyond survival.

No one can deny that there is substance to the argument that military spending is necessary in this imperfect world. Certainly, history has taught us that nations such as the U.S.S.R. and Communist China are not to be trusted.

Yet it becomes imperative that we begin to question the size of our defense budget. Those who are willing to accept it blindly must begin to have the answers to such questions as "Defend what? Our crumbling cities? A people already oppressed by poverty? A society that will spend billions for 'defense' but begrudge food for its hungry?"

The drive for survival is basic. It also can be expensive. Can we really afford to spend the bulk of our resources on guns, bombs, submarines and the like at the expense of food, books, housing and simple necessities?

It is time that we make ourselves worth the saving.

Corn

Late July — the time of the year when newspapers like the New York Times may wax agri-poetically about undulating fields of grain brushed by humid winds.

Corn, for instance, steeping to the heavens, is indeed an inspiring sight, often provoking lyric praise — for example, Rodgers and Hammerstein's "The corn is as high as an elephant's eye and it looks like it's going clear up to the sky."

Just the sight of fields of maize is uplifting but corn, unlike the lilies of the field, has an even more important status — as a staple food.

More American than apple pie, corn also is loaded with nutrients. One ear of corn with its protein, fat, carbohydrates, thiamin, calcium, niacin, Vitamin A and, yes, its 70 calories, provides a fair example of the bounty of the Lord.

And poetry aside, the sad fact is that while many of us enjoy the taste and sight of corn we must realize that there many others not sharing in the feast. A great deal of this simple but precious crop is diverted to fattening up animals to further embellish the meals of some while others have little or nothing.

If this thought bothers you enough to want to do something about it, contact the diocesan World Hunger Committee, 750 W. Main St., Rochester, 14611, telephone 328-6400.

Opinion

Columnist Disputed

Editor:

Father Atwell (Courier-Journal 6-25-75), attempted to supply background information to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. I believe his arguments are of doubtful validity.

He argues first that the Bible (the Word of God) has a repeated promise that "this land" belongs to Abraham and his descendants "forever", and that this promise is effectively repeated in the New Testament.

At the time of Copernicus it was the common opinion of learned churchmen that the Bible gave accurate information on astronomy. Eventually it was realized that one of the purposes of the Bible—salvation history—did not require that the Bible be an accurate textbook of any science.

In like manner I believe that it cannot be held that the Bible is intended to be a valid reference source for political disputes on a particular geographic territory. It would be useful to determine the consensus of Scripture scholars on this point.

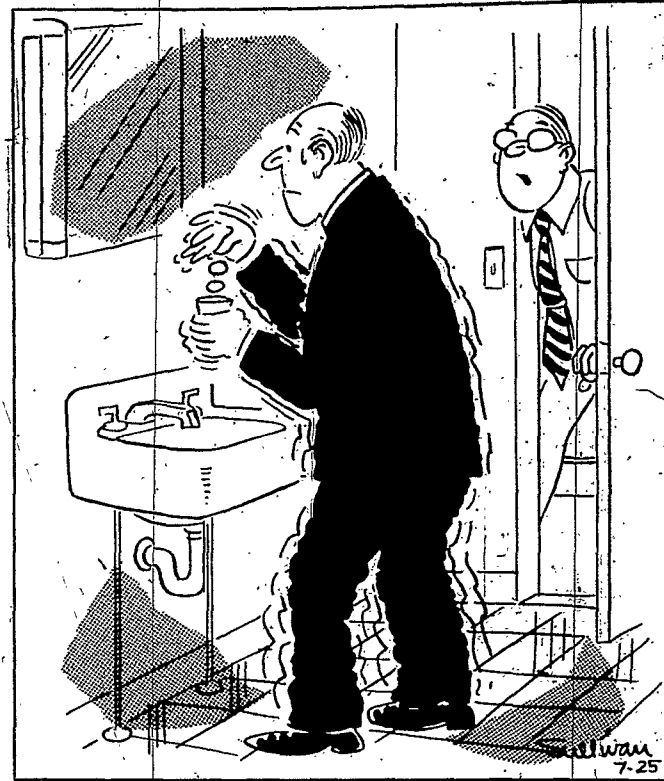
The difficulties inherent in trying to justify possession of the territory of Israel from the Bible can be seen if one attempts to specify just who are the descendants of Abraham. Father Atwell neglects to mention that, in many of his epistles, notably in his Letter to the Galatians, St. Paul points out that the true descendants of Abraham are not just the lineal descendants of the tribes of Jacob.

In Galatians, Paul says that justification did not come to Abraham by circumcision or by the Law, but by faith. The conclusion is that the true descendants of Abraham are those who accept the fullness of revelation brought by Christ and the Holy Spirit, the true descendants of Abraham would seem to be practicing Christians.

The Jew, of course, cannot accept the New Testament as part of the Bible. But Father Atwell, who does accept it, must quote all of the Bible if he wishes to argue that it is a valid source for settling territorial disputes.

Father Atwell argues next that there has been an unbroken identification of the Jews with Israel since the time of Abraham. To conclude from this that their claim upon the land is therefore more valid than that of other groups seems to me unwarranted.

There has been an unbroken identification of American In-



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dians with the North American continent since before the time of Abraham. Yet who would hold that they have the right to displace others, who came later, from the land?

In order to prevent endless squabbling over territory, both civil law and moral theology give great weight to "immemorial possession," but "immemorial possession" means, I believe, something on the order of a couple of hundred years or less.

Father Atwell is much too vague about the population of what is now the State of Israel since, say, about 1875. I think he will find that the Jews were very definitely a minority. Perhaps he can enlighten us by giving the decennial census figures.

Particularly interesting would be the census figures during World War I. In 1917 the British government, with the duplicity which perpetuates the name "perfidious Albion" for Britain, set for the Balfour Declaration. This document gave the Jews cause to think they could have more or less carte blanche to a sizable part of Palestine. At the same time it gave the Arabs the impression that there would be a (relatively) small Jewish State as part of a larger Arab world.

I certainly hope, with Father Atwell, that there may be peace in the land where the angels once proclaimed "peace on earth." However, that peace was promised to men of good will. In order to secure this good will, I believe that a more careful attention must be given to the basis for this peace than Father Atwell has so far provided.

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Why No Stand On Abortion?

Editor:

Re: Sharon Notnagle's June 25 letter. It's strange that the St. Joan's Alliance has no official stand on abortion in as much as it purports to be Catholic and the Catholic Church does have an official stand on abortion binding on all Catholics — even alliances of Catholics.

Of course Sharon calling the Hussars' prejudiced and misinformed is itself a form of the judgment and condemnation she alleges to deplore.

We are warned in the Gospel to be on the alert for wolves in sheep's skins. My appreciation to Richard and Theresa Hussar for their courage and resourcefulness in voicing their opinions on St. Joan's, ERA and NOW.

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Gay Activism Incompatible

Editor:

Kevin Scahill in his letter (Courier-Journal, 6-25-75) claimed to be both a Catholic and a gay activist.

How is this possible? As a Catholic, one is devoted to the observance of God's laws. As a gay activist, one is devoted to the defense of homosexual acts. Homosexual acts are mortal sins and mortal sin as we know is punished by hell.

Therefore Mr. Scahill is in serious error if he thinks one can be a Catholic and a gay activist at the same time.

Mr. Scahill and others like him can only hope to share in eternal happiness if they make a sincere effort to refrain from homosexual acts.

It is not merely society that condemns homosexual acts, it is our blessed Lord.

Robert Bart
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Airwaves Ban Of Concern

Editor:

Read with alarm your editorial on Madalyn O'Hair's campaign to ban religious programs on radio, and presumably TV (in the Oklahoma area).

Let's hope that this campaign is defeated at the outset so that we would not, perhaps in the near future, find religious programs being silenced in New York State and in the Rochester area. What a sad happening would be the loss of the Sunday Mass on TV. Thank you for the article — hope you will keep your readers informed of any further developments.

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Letters intended for publication must be addressed to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604.

They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced, with names and addresses. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

COURIER-JOURNAL

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Vol. 90 No. 11 July 16, 1975

Published weekly by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 75¢; 1 year subscription in U.S. \$6.00; Canada and Foreign, \$10.00. Offices, Richard Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. (716) 454-7090. Second-class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

Courier-Journal