

More Opinions

Joe Holland Rebuts Greeley

Editor:

I would be grateful if you would publish the following clarification of positions publically attributed to me by Andrew Greeley in a recent column (Courier-Journal, 6-18-75).

On Organized Labor: Greeley gives the impression I am opposed to organized labor. The truth is entirely the opposite. Organized labor always has been and still is the most important instrument for justice in this country. This is all the more true today in its battle against the multinational corporations, which are exporting so many American jobs, and in its battle against government support of unemployment. Unfortunately many people in the American public do not view labor this way. A 1974 poll conducted by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan showed that in a list of 15 institutions, labor unions ranked 13th in the job they were doing for the country, with the military ranking 1st and large corporations ranking 8th. Now I would be delighted to have the data proven inaccurate, or to discover that public opinion has shifted massively over the last 12 months. My point, however, in the text which Greeley cites from THE ECUMENIST, was to try to change that opinion, to argue that in spite of its shortcomings,

organized labor has been the common people's strongest weapon in the bitter struggle for justice in this country since the explosion of industrialism. But support for labor is no reason not to offer constructive criticism, particularly around what Msgr. George Higgins, in his 1974 Labor Day Statement, calls "the immediate task of organizing the unorganized." Powerful economic interests in American society have always been willing to play off organized workers against unorganized workers, to play off one racial/ethnic group against another, and even to play off men against women. The labor movement has long struggled against this manipulation, but the struggle is far from over. The organizing of all workers, of all colors, of all levels of skill, and of both sexes, "especially among Black and Spanish-speaking workers" (in Msgr. Higgin's words) can only strengthen the American labor movement. And it badly needs that strength, because right now it is under attack.

On American Farmers: Greeley charges that I blame American farmers for the world food shortage. Again the truth is entirely the opposite. I have spent most of the last two years talking across the country in defense of small farmers, as well as in defense of the starving of the world. What I have attacked is agribusiness, which is the enemy of small farmers. Agribusiness is part of the giant corporate structure which so unjustly controls much of American life. Agribusiness is international business, as was recently shown in the case of one of the great American grain companies, the Bunge Corporation. "It is totally owned by a holding company, Los Andes, N.V., of Curacao, the Netherlands Antilles, which in turn is owned by Bunge & Born of Buenos Aires, whose stock is held by the wealthy Bunge and Born families." (New York Times, June 25, 1975, p. C 22) Much of agribusiness, in my opinion, operates against the self-interest of the world's hungry, against the self-interest of the American consumer, and against the self-interest of the small farmer, who is being forced deeper into bankruptcy every day.

On the American People: Greeley charges that I blame the American people for murder of the world's starving poor. Again quite the opposite. I blame international market structures, which serve world elites, but I do not blame the American people. Those same structures hurt the American people, by exporting their jobs, for instance. Contrary to Greeley's charge, I have great hope in the concern of the American people about injustice, whether at home or abroad. The root of the hunger problem, I believe, is the technical development model, capital-intensive in nature and manipulative of national labor markets. This model serves the interests of powerful elites across the world, but it does not serve ordinary people. Now a lot of hard working people from this country have watched their tax dollars go abroad supposedly to help the poor, and they are rightly angry to find out that their money too often was used to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, both at home and abroad, and even to support political repression. To be uncritical about foreign aid is no service to the world's poor nor to the overburdened ordinary American taxpayer.

Greeley makes a second charge that I have no respect for the American people, because I see them selling their souls on the labor market; I have no respect for the economy's employment system, which forces people to take jobs where their talents are not appreciated, where their dignity is not recognized, where they are laid off when they are no longer "useful," and where the government sits back while official unemployment climbs toward 10% (unofficially much higher). I criticize the employment system, not because I have no respect for the American people, but because I have so much respect for them. They deserve something better.

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Greeley Piece Disturbing

Editor:

Heaven help us if Father Greeley's column (6-18-75) reflects Christian opinion. This writer never heard of "Joe" Holland or the Jesuit-sponsored Center for Concern; but has long recognized that it's high time someone became concerned; thinks that Joe's contentions are correct, justified and overdue.

If Father Greeley himself understood the "complexity of international economics" (it's not so all-fired complex) he would see the hand-writing on the wall: While big business tries desperately to reconcile the right to plunder with free enterprise, a Communist-dominated world dictatorship — with the help of international bankers — is surreptitiously taking control of our government.

Amid all the wrangling in Congress and the press, never a word on the basic facts of that mysterious entity called inflation. One need not be an economist to know that bank credit creates new money since it is extended against fractional reserves — reserves so small as to rival thin air. This is sheer counterfeit albeit it legalized by the Federal Reserve Act of 1913.

There's no denying that inflation is profitable to its perpetrators, to speculators and to business as well; but, as Joe puts it, "People are blinded and forced to participate in the orgy." Father Greeley boasts of the "hundreds of billions" doled out in foreign aid; but does not mention the host of millionaires created in the

process; or the devastation of the middle and lower income brackets via taxation and high prices.

Labor unions are (or were) in essence all that Fr. Greeley claims, but look what inflation has done to them: It is conceivable that if half the nation were unemployed and destitute, the other half would be striking for higher wages and pensions unmindful of the hindmost to whom the burden is always passed in one way or another.

We of organized labor (the writer carries a gold card) often match the callous disregard of business and the professions for the welfare of their fellow men. Instead of battling inflation, a benighted people are "battling each other" for the spoils.

If there is indeed a genuine Christian concern for our impoverished brothers, then "why in hell" don't we stand up as a Christian nation under God to demand a halt to legalized banditry? Or have we found it more expedient to join the bandits? With all our outward evidence of faith, with all our aborted efforts toward human development, we remain illiterate both in economics and in religion as taught by The Great Economist Himself.

People "turn to Karl Marx" only when Christianity fails. The present rate of turn is too fast for comfort. Joe is dealing with facts, not "prophetic prophecies," though the latter cannot be ruled out in a hungry world with a destructive capacity equal to 25 tons of T.N.T. for every human being. Ironically, there is a potential for plenty — plus modest luxury — for every one of them.

Under the existing capitalistic standard of ethics, world dictatorship could well be the only solution. A poll for its leadership would presently find Christ trailing the Beast.

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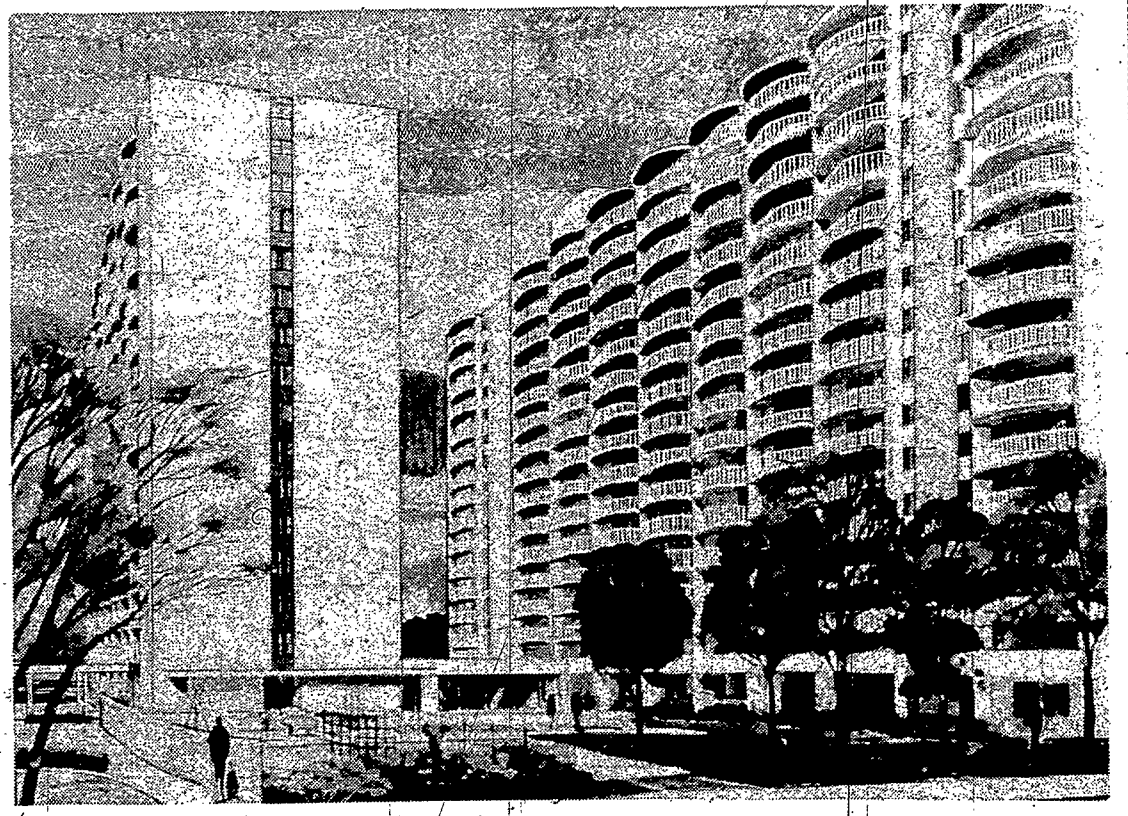
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