

Priests Council Rejects Participation in Goal Review

By JOHN DASH

The Priests Council, four years after calling for the establishment of an office for diocesan planning, last week took the major portion of its meeting to vote itself out of a program of diocesan goal review, one of the chief ingredients in the planning office's system of streamlining diocesan programs.

In addition, the council expressed its wish to be consulted next June when the time comes to renew the contract of Dr. Felix Lopez, the architect of the goal-setting process used by the office.

The action was precipitated more than a month ago when Father Peter Bayer, planning director, requested the council to name five senators, from among whom Bishop Joseph L. Hogan would choose two to participate in a special review committee and undergo the Lopez goal-setting training.

At last month's meeting, following a stormy session, Father Bayer was asked to re-present his proposal for bloc discussion, simplifying the language and reducing the time priests would be expected to put into the project. The original proposal indicated that about 150 hours of work would be needed.

Father Bayer did revise his proposal, cutting the time requirement almost in half, using non-technical language, and stating the importance of the program of goal-planning review.

It was further suggested in the revised proposal, however, that review committees participate in the remaining Lopez training sessions for diocesan departments. One department spokesman reported that this suggestion came as a result of a training session for department heads who challenged the ability of a review committee to judge goals without understanding the mechanics of their formulation.

At last week's meeting the senators reported the reaction of their respective blocs to the new proposal. The word "frustration" was used several times.

Father Ronald Stacy reported that his bloc had instructed him to abstain from voting on the proposal. He said he guessed the instruction was "an expression of 'future shock' at the proliferation of committees and commissions in the diocese. Guys' minds are just bogged and shocked," he said.

He further noted that his bloc had expressed doubt of the authority the committee would carry, and that some doubt was expressed over the effectiveness of the Lopez system itself.

Father Elmer Heindl said his constituents' reaction was "almost identical."

Among the older priests, with very few exceptions, he said, "Frustration is coming through and no one seems to like the idea but they're compelled by other commitments to isolate themselves — to take care of their own parishes and let the rest of the world take care of itself."

Father Winfried Kellner also cited the frustration in his region over what they saw as increased bureaucracy. He said that while planning is accepted, the question is raised over the process. He also questioned the credibility of the committee's authority.

Senator after senator echoed these sentiments, a few noting, however, that they were prepared to submit a name for the committee.

"Professionals should have planned better to prepare us. If now we're confused, how about a year from now?" one asked.

Another noted that his region has "no approval for Lopez as they understand it."

Father William Gordinier said his constituents also expressed frustration that so much time was being spent on internal matters — time that should be used for other things.

Father James Hewes questioned whether the program is "really a felt need or a created need?"

Father Louis Hohman said his region's "resentment is outranked by simple confusion."

However, he noted, "This thing started out because of a proliferation of apostolates, if you will." He said that "some kind of complex machinery is needed to sort out" all of the varied works in the Church. And simply to abandon the Lopez System in a desire for simplicity will not solve the problems faced by the Church, he said.

Father James Lawlor, who chaired the meeting in Father James Marvin's absence, told the council that Father James Baker's region questioned the formation of a review committee. He said they felt the Diocesan Pastoral Council should assume the review function.

DSC Fills Goal Request

The Diocesan Sisters Council, [DSC] has named five sisters who would be willing to serve on the diocesan goal review committee. Bishop Joseph L. Hogan will choose two from among the five. At its Sept. 13 meeting, the DSC passed a motion, 16-2, to accede to the bishop's request for the names, which were submitted by members to the executive committee and forwarded to the bishop.

Father Lawlor further noted that in his own region, among those who have already participated in Lopez training, "a certain element, a certain number" are "very distressed by it."

Father Bayer, speaking for the proposal, reminded the assembly that it was the council which in 1971 called for the establishment of his office of planning.

He further reminded them of their approval of a contract in 1972-73 with the Genesee Finger Lakes Region Planning Board to help with a job description for such an office. That description

included research, development and evaluation, he said.

He reminded them that his office was established in 1973 with their support.

Father Bayer then noted that in September 1974 he asked for representatives from the Priests Council "so there would be no distance" between the work of his office and the council.

Lopez, he said, was brought in during that Fall, and in November Father Bayer asked the Priests Council to reaffirm his job description and he asked them to answer whether Lopez was not part of that description.

Council minutes of that meeting do not indicate that any action was taken on Father Bayer's requests. The minutes, however, report, "Again, the fears of more meetings, paper work, and bureaucracy became quite evident as the Council members reported the feelings of their blocs."

He emphasized that he needed the support of the Priests Council throughout the process.

He further noted last week that he had complied with the council's request for a simplified version of the review committee

proposal and had cut the time involvement by 50 per cent.

Father Heindl said, "In all honesty I agree with what Peter says." He said that he thought the major reason for the difficulty the proposal faced was that individual senators didn't do a good-enough "selling job" to their constituents.

The parliamentary procedures of motions, amendments and stipulations following the discussion of the revised proposal, however, resulted in the priests refusing to associate themselves with it.

Other discussions and actions in the council included a clarification of yearly increments to clerical salaries; voting down a proposal by the council's social action committee to gather and distribute information on county detoxification centers; approving a motion instructing the president of the council to approach the heads of the two other diocesan councils in a matter of amalgamating the three social action committees; approving a motion encouraging Bishop Joseph L. Hogan to implement the recommendations of the long range ministerial needs committee through the Office of Pastoral Ministry.



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