

Multi-Nationals Draw Fire from Churches

By Religious News Service

Religious leaders and organizations around the world have become increasingly critical of the so-called trans-national or multi-national corporations, charging that these industrial giants are contributing significantly to the exploitation of the poor, particularly in the Third World.

Over the past few years, international and national church bodies, as well as many prestigious churchmen, have denounced trans-national corporate endeavors — from producing oil to growing

bananas — in developing countries.

They have called on the leadership within the churches to exercise a more prophetic role in reforming or eradicating a system of international economic development which has for decades, according to its critics, fed on the powerlessness of the poor and the oppressed.

In September, 1974, an agency of the U.S. Catholic bishops became one of the first church-wide organizations to question seriously the roles, motivations and "enormous power" of the relatively few multi-national corporations and banks.

Citing Pope Paul's 1971 reflections on possible abuses of power by such corporations, the U.S. Catholic Conference's Department of Social Development and World Peace said: "The time is at hand for us to question the enormous power wielded by so few people and institutions, but in a more fundamental way, to question the underlying motivation behind such unbridled power."

The agency noted that particularly in Latin America, church leaders and lay, religious and clergy groups have pinpointed the influence of foreign businesses, governments and cultures as a cause of considerable poverty and social ills in their countries.

Just last December, in a wide-ranging report on human development issues, the World Council of Churches (WCC) Fifth Assembly in Nairobi described trans-national corporations as "a typical example of the ways in which capitalist forces in the international and national spheres join together to oppress the poor and keep them under domination."

Similarly, a National Council of Churches (NCC) ecumenical consultation on the causes of hunger, held last September in Green Bay, Wis., observed that "our society's assumption... that a competitive pursuit of private gain will work to provide the best possible life for all... has resulted in the exploitation of the majority for the sake of the few, and the Third World for the sake of the first world."

The Roman Catholic Church's most outspoken critic of trans-national corporations, Archbishop Helder Pessoa-Camara of Olinda-Recife, Brazil, told a group of Catholic educators meeting in Minneapolis last fall that these industrial and business enterprises are helping to perpetuate grave injustices in the Third World by reinforcing privileged groups and making "internal colonialism" even more burdensome.

At about the same time, another high-ranking Catholic prelate took more specific aim at what he called "human rights violations" in Honduras.

Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati, president of the U.S. bishops conference, said the large corporations in Honduras were minimizing benefits to poor workers. "Like so many other so-called underdeveloped countries," he noted, "(Honduras) is rich in people and land but the vast majority of its population is forced to live in a state of misery while a tiny minority, the national oligarchy, grows rich and the multi-national corporations realize ever greater profits."

Last October, the NCC filed a stockholder resolution with Gulf & Western Corporation's operations in the Dominican Republic because Dominican sources complained that G&W's massive landholdings had had an adverse effect on food production and that the corporation was paying its sugar cane workers wages that were below

subsistence.

During an April, 1975, London meeting of delegates representing Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions from 12 European countries, a resolution was passed condemning "certain activities" of some multi-national corporations "which deliberately or otherwise subvert the established order of those countries where they operate or sustain dictatorial and/or racist regimes or distort production, marketing and distribution of goods."

At about the same time in New York, several top U.S. business leaders joined churchmen and others in appealing to big industries to consider religious values in determining policies and in protesting the violations of human rights in poor lands where they operate.

In a 73-page document, prepared at the request of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and dealing exclusively with trans-national corporations, the business and religious leaders also urged churches to make critical examinations of the performances of trans-national corporations and seek "beneficial social impact" from church investments.

Reports published by the Church of England last April called for codes of good industrial practice between corporations and the societies in which the corporations operate.

In July, the United Church of Christ's General Synod meeting in Minneapolis urged "multi-national corporations to improve the welfare and to enlarge the dignity of the people of the countries where they operate." It said "overseas corporations have a moral responsibility... to seek to persuade host countries guilty of repressive practices to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations."

WCC General Secretary Philip Potter disclosed that several of the trans-national corporations have contacted the international ecumenical body and have raised with us how they can behave in the world today.

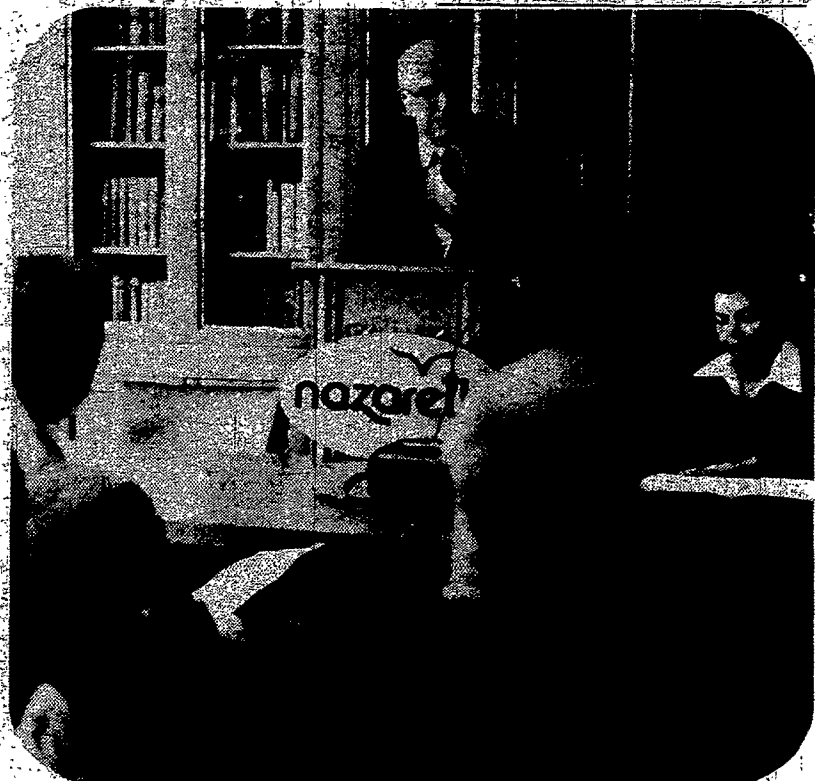
Recently, an official of the United Nations, Dr. Robert Muller, Deputy Under-Secretary General for Inter-Agency Affairs, told a Catholic-sponsored "celebration of peace" in New York that it is imperative that a "code of ethics" be formulated to govern the actions of trans-national corporations.

Archbishop Pessoa-Camara has said the U.S. could best observe its Bicentennial by exchanging its "empire" status for that of being a brother country which gives an example of liberty and justice for all.

In the archbishop's country, according to a recent economic analysis, the influx of investments by multi-national corporations has spurred the economy but also has kept local competition from developing and driven many existing competitors out of business.

A Canadian Catholic prelate, Bishop Remi de Roo of Victoria, B.C., who made a six-nation tour of Latin America in the Spring of 1973, said that when the theme of solidarity between North and South America is brought up, Latin Americans "tell us that the sinful social structures of which Canada and the U.S. are a part lie at the root of many of their problems."

"Part of our riches comes from our exploitation of the natural resources of others," he noted. "Our high standard of living is made possible at the expense of the poor."



Photos by Ben Sussio

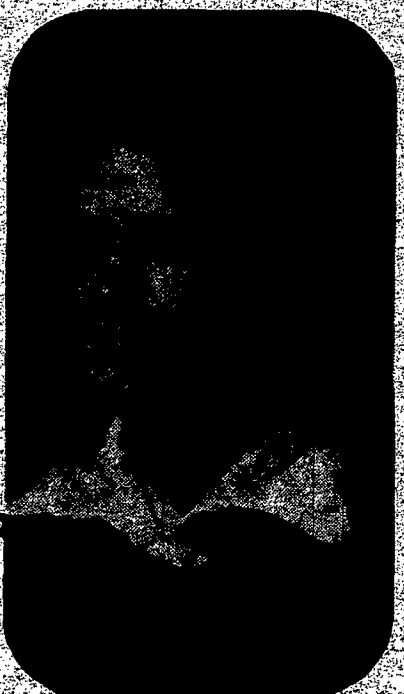
Nazareth Names New President

Robert A. Kidera, above, president of Sacred Heart University in Bridgeport, Conn., will become the first male president of Nazareth College on July 1. Below, Kidera shakes hands with the retiring president, Dr. Alice L. Foley. Next to him is Mrs. Kidera. Supreme Court Justice Emmett J. Schnepf, president of the board of trustees, stands at the right. Dr. Foley, a trustee of the college for 30 years, has served as president for the past four years.



St. Bernard's Man Ordained for Albany

Father Thomas F. Berardi, who worked in this diocese as a student at St. Bernard's Seminary, was ordained to the priesthood Jan. 24 by Bishop Edwin B. Brodenick of Albany. The ordination took place at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, Schenectady, where Father Berardi had been serving as deacon. He had field education assignments at Our Lady of Mercy parish in Greece and Holy Spirit, Penfield, and in the Marriage Tribunal while studying here for his Master of Divinity degree. He is completing work for a master's degree in Scripture. Father Berardi, a native of Kingston, N.Y., taught at Kingston High School before undertaking seminary training.



Scholarship

Karen Smith, a 1973 graduate of St. Mary's in Dansville, won the first annual Miles Scholarship Competition in chemistry at Alfred University. Miss Smith received a gold plaque and is eligible for a \$500 scholarship if she decides to attend Alfred.



Valentine Special
Served Valentine's Day
5 to 10 P.M.

CUPID'S CHOICE
Dinner For Two
Filet Mignon or N.Y. Strip
\$19.76 \$17.76
Including fruit plate,
a generous salad,
baked potato, creme
de mint parfait, a bottle
of champagne... and candies
for your valentine.

Ray Dunlap
at the Piano

Banquet
Facilities
Available

cafe AVION

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