

DSC Feels Left Out On Insurance Question

By MARGARET CONNOLLY

Is the Pastoral Office following the process it devised for the current Property Insurance Review? Or is it bypassing the consultative bodies?

This double-barrelled question came up Saturday at the December meeting of the Diocesan Sisters Council, and the sisters decided to put the question to Bishop Joseph L. Hogan.

Questions about the specifics of the insurance situation will be included in the council's letter, copies of which will go to Thomas A. Weber, director of finance, and James M. Noonan, the bishop's administrative assistant.

The finance committee review seemed to be leading quickly to a transfer of church insurance business out of the diocese into the hands of a Chicago firm. Council members discussed a report from Sisters Jacqueline DeMers and Louise Weber, who said they and Priests Council representatives had been called to a single meeting at 8:30 a.m. Nov. 24. They gathered, they said, that the finance committee intended to wind up the matter by Jan. 1, or perhaps a month later. The letter to the bishop will include a formal request that no decision be made before May 31, so there will be time to correct what several speakers termed injustices.

The agenda for the monthly

meeting at the St. Joseph Motherhouse included reports from the transportation committee, from two sisters who attended the Call to Action conference in Detroit and from Sister Kathleen Kircher on her work with divorced Catholics.

The sisters decided that no transportation policy could be proposed on time for the preparation of 1977 parish budgets. They affirmed the sense of two minority reports that call for a transportation allowance, rather than for the provision of automobiles in specific parish situations.

A budget of \$2,475 was adopted to cover the cost of membership in other organizations, of printing, postage and other operating expenses.

Sisters Molly Brown and Patricia Frisk gave some details about the sub-groups they worked with at the Detroit conference, which dealt, respectively, with Personhood and Family. Sister Molly noted on the side that people practiced in parliamentary procedure often carried the day against a sizable opposition that came in "thirty seconds too late." Sister Patricia spoke of ministry to the family as a neglected field. The young and the old are served by church organizations, but those in the middle are not, and the conference group felt there was a need for counseling in the art of "parenting," she said.

The report on Property Insurance Review began with a description of the process laid down in a letter received from Noonan last May, that is that the finance committee would make the decision and that the communication process would be "heavily centered through our consultative bodies." The latter were asked at that time to participate in the factual analysis and in the preparation of the final

recommendation. But the consultative bodies were called, on five days notice, to the single meeting in November, and that was their only involvement, the report said.

"In addition to this, it was felt the present insurance agent had not been properly approached on a competitive basis," the council's delegates said.

One sister commented that local business people had been very generous to church institutions, and that some of "the new people" didn't know this. Another suggested that an overall look should be taken at the matter of transferring diocesan business out of the diocese.

It was said that parishes pay 95 per cent of the premiums for

property insurance, and that they were not directly represented in the review. Sister Judith Heberle said that the congregations had not been consulted, either. "They may have to take a stand," Sister Jamesine Riley remarked.

Sister Kathleen explained that one of her purposes is to acquaint people with the plight of divorced Catholics. There are parishes in this diocese, she said, where the son of divorced parents is not allowed to serve as an altar boy; where meeting rooms are closed to the divorced Catholic groups; where their meeting notices cannot be printed in the bulletin. She said that the excommunication of the divorced, remarried Catholic is peculiar to the United States, and that canon lawyers are questioning its legality.

Priests Look To Own Retirements

The question of retirements rose at last week's Priests Council meeting at St. Michael's, the former Divine Word Seminary overlooking Hemlock Lake.

The subject has been of concern to the assembly for a long time.

The occasion of this latest debate was a report issued by the Joint Committee on Personnel Procedures, which detailed a survey completed by 216 priests in the diocese.

The report urges the Priests Council to make the following recommendations to Bishop Joseph L. Hogan.

Council asks the Clergy Relief Executive Committee to meet with an ad hoc group of representative priests to express the rationale, scope and direction of clergy relief policies in contrast to the canonical diocesan responsibilities for care of

parish - with a report to the Council in February.

Council requests the diocesan financial office to give serious consideration to a substantial direct payment from the general fund into the priests' retirement fund.

Council recommends to diocesan financial office that the yearly per priest retirement contribution from each employer be increased beginning 7/77 from 1,000 to 1,200.

Council recommends to the diocesan financial office that the retirement benefit for diocesan priests at 70 years of age be increased to 400 per month, as soon as this does not jeopardize the retirement fund.

Council recommends to the diocesan financial office that the 77-78 central administration budget contain a line item titled clergy fiscal needs that reflects the expected and recurring expenses that can be projected as the responsibility of the diocese.

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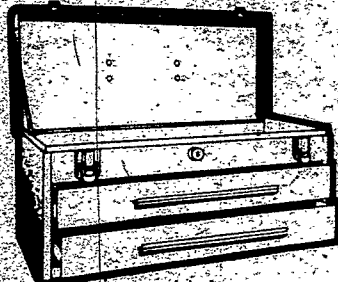
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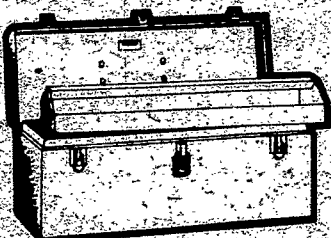
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