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# COURIER-JOURNAL

## Southern Tier-Auburn Geneva

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### Stevens' Labor Abuses Shock Waverly Workers

By MARTIN TOOMBS  
Southern Tier Editor

Waverly—"Is this taking place in the United States or some other country?" was the question raised following a movie detailing widespread abuses of employee rights by the J.P. Stevens textile company.

Father Patrick J. Sullivan, CSC, the Catholic liaison for the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) commented that such a question is often asked. He assured the 40 persons present, representing most union locals in the area, that the events depicted occurred in the United States, specifically in North and South Carolina.

Father Sullivan's appearance May 17 was sponsored by the International Molders and Allied Workers Union Local 417.

Most of the question which followed the movie, "Testimony," which was produced by ACTWU, indicated shocked disbelief on the part of the union members that such violations of health, safety and labor laws as shown in the film could continue for so many years without effective governmental action.

Father Sullivan responded that the delays were the result of the attitudes of the J.

P. Stevens Company, the nation's second largest textile producer. The company has been willing to spend as much money as needed to delay unionizing efforts, including appeals as far as the Supreme Court, he noted. The Supreme Court has refused to review each case, he added. Father Sullivan also noted the effect of the political situation in the Carolinas, alleging that lack of proper law enforcement could partially be blamed on "the corruption of governmental agencies."

J. P. Stevens' labor record has caused a boycott against company products to be declared by the ACTWU, with the backing of many labor and religious groups, including the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the National Council of Churches, the National Association of Women Religious, and the National Federation of Priests Councils.

The Catholic bishops of the Southeast have attempted to mediate the dispute, but the company has been reluctant to participate in discussions.

Father Sullivan noted that "this company's lawlessness" has no parallel "in the annals of the Labor Relations Board."

"Stevens has 1,200 violations of the National

Labor Relations Act," he said.

A problem with trying to get Stevens to abide by the law, he said, is that the framers of the Wagner Act, which defined most labor law, "never dreamed that there would be people like J. P. Stevens," willfully and continually flouting the law.

That is why the currently proposed labor reform act is important, he said. The bill, to be debated soon by the Senate, is "not necessarily going to make unionization easier," Father Sullivan said, but it will keep those who violate the law from "profiteering from it," by increasing penalties.

The proposed changes also would speed up many current processes, including employee reinstatement and elections, he said. It also would "deny flagrant violators of the labor law the right to make money off the government," he said, noting that Stevens had \$11.5 million in government contracts last year.

Noting Stevens' influence in North and South Carolina, Father Sullivan said that the company affects all the people of both states. He pointed out that industrial wages in North Carolina are \$55 per week less than the national average, and that the state is the least unionized in the country. As a result, he said, the state is lacking in

proper educational, health and social services. In fact, he said, North and South Carolina "vie with one another" for the title of the worst state in the country in which to live.

Father Sullivan pointed out that the film was produced by the union, and that another, "Whose Side Are You On?" has been made by the company. He added that two objective studies also have been done, by Mike Wallace of CBS 60 Minutes, and by public television's MacNeil-Lehrer Report.

The movie consisted of interviews primarily with current and former Stevens employees. Among the accusations presented were that the company cared little for the health and safety of its workers, has practiced racial discrimination and even incited racial tension, and has fired employees for supporting unionization. The prevalent opinion among those interviewed was that the company cared little for its employees. One woman stated that "all they want is your blood, and then they let you go." Another commented that "the looms are all that counted," not the persons operating them.

One woman, fired for union activity, had her husband fired as well. The personnel director at the plant, she reported in the movie, told them they would never work again in that town. Four years and 21 days later, she said, the Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling that the firing had been illegal, and they received full back pay and reinstatement. She commented that "nothing can make up for four years of going without and not having enough to eat."

The film also pointed out that the company has received a "sweeping court order" that it end racial discrimination, a decision which the company is appealing.

Father Sullivan urged those attending to support the boycott of J. P. Stevens products, to write federal legislators in support of the current proposed changes in labor law, and to do what they can to educate other persons and institutions about the boycott. He called on people not to be dismayed by the difficulty of the boycott, as J. P. Stevens uses so many different brand names, but to be willing to be careful with textile purchases.



### Burn Telethon

Kelly Baker of Wellsboro, Pa., burned in a fire that took the lives of her parents, is the poster child for the Burn Unit Telethon Sunday, June 11 on television station WENY from 1 to 6 p.m. The telethon will benefit the burn unit at St. Joseph's Hospital, where Kelly was a patient for two months. Proceeds from the drive will be used for educational programs and professional instruction. The drive is being sponsored by the volunteer and professional firefighters in the New York counties of Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben, and Bradford County, Pa.

### Mercy Sisters Note 50th

Elmira—Sister Mary Carmella and Sister Mary Joachim, two Sisters of Mercy and teachers at Notre Dame High School, will be honored for a combined total of 100 years of service in special ceremonies at the school Sunday, May 28.

Recognition festivities for the golden anniversaries will begin with a Mass at 11 p.m. at Notre Dame, followed by a breakfast and reception from noon until 2 p.m. The Notre Dame Board of Governors and the alumni associations of Elmira Catholic High and Notre Dame are sponsoring the event.

Both sisters are Rochester natives.

Sister Carmella attained her bachelors and masters degrees at St. Bonaventure University and her Masters of Science in Education at Union College, Schenectady. She also pursued her education at Cornell University and Hope College, Holland, Michigan.

Her teaching career began at St. Patrick's third grade, Elmira. She taught at the former Elmira Catholic High School and ranks among the pioneer teachers at Notre Dame in 1955. Subjects she has taught include religion, sciences, typing, bookkeeping and business math. She also is moderator of the Science

Math Club and the Alumni Association. She has taught summer school at Elmira Free Academy and is Coordinator of Religious Education at St. John the Baptist Church.

She also is a representative to the Chemung-Schuyler Human Development Committee, and is storefront coordinator.

Sister Joachim began her teaching career at St. Thomas the Apostle, Rochester. She, too, taught at Elmira Catholic High where she taught science and math. As a Notre Dame pioneer, she added work with guidance. She moderates the National Honor Society and the Parents Association, teaches summer school at Elmira Free Academy and in-service courses at Catherine McAuley College. She is involved in the religious education programs at St. John, the Baptist and Our Lady of Lourdes parishes.

Sister Joachim received her bachelors degree at St. Bonaventure University and did graduate work there and at Notre Dame University.

Those who wish to participate in the recognition program are invited to the events May 28.

### Program Is Social And Educational

By MARTIN TOOMBS  
Southern Tier Editor

Ithaca—Forty parishioners of Immaculate Conception Parish turned out May 20 for a "Cabaret Nite" of candlelight socializing, and, not incidentally, a talk on the changes in the Church given by Joseph Kelly, director of the diocese's continuing education program.

The event was sponsored by the parish Religious Education Committee. Soft music, refreshments and gaily decorated tables provided an unusual atmosphere for the program.

Kelly noted the advantage of such a gathering, when "adult Christian people" can get together "for an educational experience" that really can't be accomplished in a few minutes from the pulpit.

The lack of educational opportunities is a key to many persons' misunderstanding the changes in the Church, he noted. When the changes began, he noted, "we couldn't go back to school" to learn about them.

Problems were caused, he noted, when people asked

"Why, How come, What's behind this?" and had no opportunity to learn the answers. They didn't realize, he pointed out, that the changes were based on "a well thought out position."

As for how changes could be proposed, Kelly noted that humans are accustomed to thinking in systems. When asked to add two plus two, most would respond four, he said, assuming that the question was in a base 10 number system. But in a base three, for example, the answer would be 11.

Humans "think in a system," he said, and it becomes "easy for us to think that ours is the only system."

The system used depends on cultural factors, he noted, pointing out that a different culture with a different system would arrive at a different, but correct, answer for that system.

What has been difficult for some to understand, he noted, is that "theology, the study of God, is something men and women do," and is therefore also "a human science which is subject to a system."

"A man or a woman thinks about God according to his or her background," he stated, and "we are formed

by the culture in which we live and work," and that culture influences our understanding of God.

It is important to note that "God is not changing, men and women's perception of God is changing," he said, "because their point of view and human experience in society has changed."

Many fought the changes brought about by Vatican II because they "took the old model" of Church structure "to be absolute," he explained, and didn't recognize it as a product of an earlier culture.

The old model of Church was a hierarchical one, he noted, with sharply defined lines of authority, similar to the feudal system. The model of the post-Vatican II Church is more like a wheel, he explained, with Christ as the hub, and Church members on the spokes, working to get closer to the hub. In a wheel, Kelly noted, "each of the spokes has a job to do." The same is true in the new model of Church with emphasis being placed on lay committees and lay ministries. The model more closely parallels our democratic society, he noted.

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