

Fr. J. Bryan Hehir

SALT II Accords Deserve Support

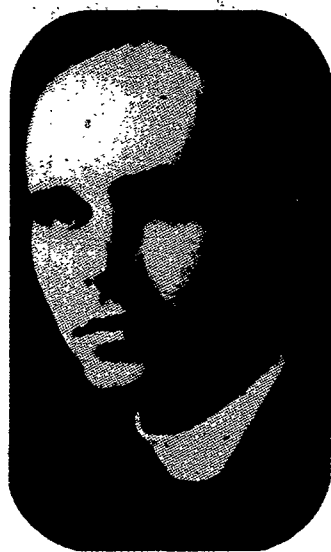
By MICHAEL GRODEN

Addressing an audience at Blessed Sacrament School last Friday evening, Father J. Bryan Hehir, executive secretary of the Office of International Justice and Peace for the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), said that the proposed SALT II agreements are "fundamentally immoral," but the alternatives would be worse.

The SALT II pacts are immoral, according to Father Hehir, because they are based on a concept of deterrence. Each side (the United States and the USSR) possesses the ability to destroy the other and "holds each other's population hostage" by threatening to use that power, he said. This "mutual threat" system is not the real answer.

The alternatives, however, are worse. Father Hehir said that without the SALT agreements nuclear proliferation could, and probably would grow alarmingly.

During his speech, well attended despite frigid temperatures, Father Hehir briefly outlined the history of disarmament. He said that the beginning of the nuclear age brought about a new outlook



FR. HEHIR

towards war among many people. Previously there were two major schools of thought in regard to war; the pacifist philosophy which held that there was no legitimate reason for war and the "just war" doctrine that says military force is necessary under certain conditions.

When the nuclear bomb was made these two outlooks came together to create "nuclear pacifism;" some force was needed in certain situations, but nuclear force should never be used.

People also came to realize the ultimate danger that proliferation of nuclear weapons created and began to seek the

reduction in these weapons.

The SALT agreements were the first real attempts, by the superpowers, to achieve disarmament. Father Hehir said he is not happy with the SALT agreements but supports them because they can "give us the time" necessary to negotiate a real reduction of nuclear weaponry.

He added that the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) has voted to support the SALT II agreements providing they can see the whole treaty first. They know 90 percent of its contents so far.

Father Hehir said that the Catholic Church has long been on record as opposing nuclear weapons, especially Popes John XXIII and Paul VI who both realized the "growing urgency" for disarmament.

He feels that the Church community can be a real force for disarmament by creating a sense of support for the agreement.

The agreements will be made on "very technical terms," he said, but these

terms will be based on how the public feels about the issue. That's when the Christian Community can contribute.

He added that on an individual level New York residents should contact Senator Patrick Moynihan to voice their views on disarmament. Father Hehir feels that Moynihan will be "a central figure in the decisions" dealing with disarmament. He said that Moynihan "has not come down yet" on where he stands on disarmament.

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'Mail Order' Ministers Target of State Suit

Albany (RNS) — The State of New York has filed a suit demanding an end to religious property tax exemption for "mail order" ministers ordained by the California-based Universal Life Church.

More than 230 "mail order" ministers in Catskill towns, who have claimed and received tax exemption on their properties, have been called on to pay their current taxes and taxes owed in the last three years.

In addition, the state has sued the Hardenburgh tax assessor, Robert Kerwick, and three members of the town assessment board, for \$1 million in punitive damages for allegedly being the "ring leaders" of the mail order exemptions.

Over the opposition of the State Board of Equalization and Assessment, Kerwick granted religious tax exemptions in 1977 to 90 per cent of Hardenburgh's 236 residents who claimed to be ministers of the Universal Life Church.

Tax assessors in Liberty,

Rochester and New Paltz also granted a few property tax exemptions to Universal Life ministers in their communities, but Hardenburgh has been at the center of the controversy.

Kerwick said other religious groups in the area have received exemptions and he planned to "enforce the law equally."

He said the Universal Life Church has received tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service and is exempt from paying sales tax by the New York State Tax Commission.

The state argues that the towns and ministers have conspired to avoid paying taxes. The state has also questioned whether the Universal Life Church is a bona fide religious body.

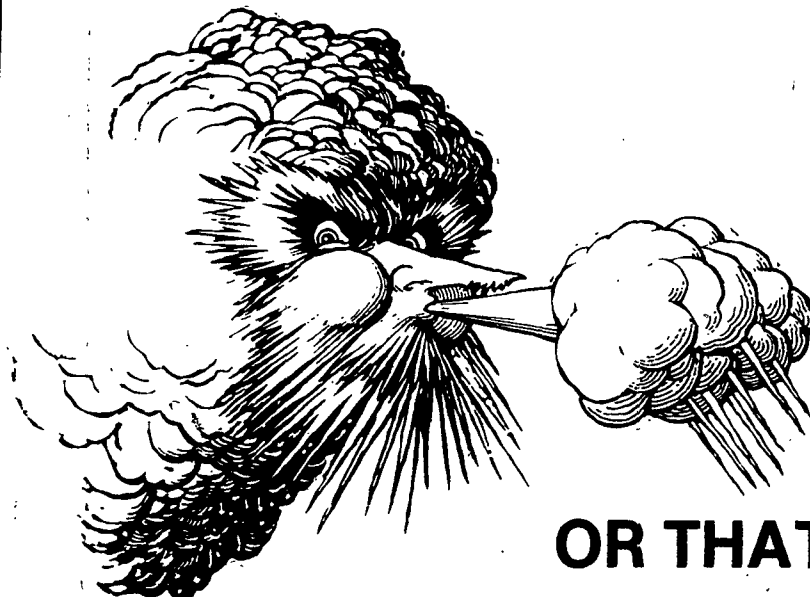
"I'm a Roman Catholic and I'm not going to treat the Universal Church any differently than any other church," Kerwick said. "You can't say this church or that church doesn't comply with the law because we don't like the church. Change the law."

Oratorio

Two 20th century masterpieces of music, Zoltan Kodaly's "Te Deum" and Ralph Vaughn Williams' "A Sea Symphony," will be performed by the Rochester Oratorio Society, under the direction of Theodore Hollenbach, on Sunday, March 4, at 8:15 p.m., in the Eastman Theater.

Mothers

Mothers of Teens will go on retreat at the Cenacle March 23-25. The retreat will be led by Father James Mason, a Redemptorist. Reservations may be made by calling the Cenacle Ministry Office at (716) 271-8755, or Ruth Tracy at (716) 663-3948.



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