

Charities Board Protests Mental Health Cutbacks

By John Dash

The board of diocesan Catholic Charities has again assumed the mantle of advocate, protesting Gov. Mario Cuomo's plan to close or phase out Craig Developmental Center, and cut back on money available to Rochester Psychiatric Center.

Both plans are part of the governor's budget, under debate and vote in Albany late last week.

The board's action came during its regular meeting last Tuesday. The board was unanimous in its resolve to protest the cuts in service to the mentally ill and handicapped.

Taking such position in the public, political forum is still rare for the board, until 1981 exclusively concerned with internal workings of the Charities movement here. In August of that year the board issued a resolution against a proposed state bond sale to raise funds for prison construction.

In last week's resolution on the situation at Craig, the board stated, "In light of the suffering and trauma that would be inflicted on hundreds of patients and families and employees of Craig Developmental Center and the commitment of Catholic Charities to its fundamental values concerning the rights and care of the weakest and poorest

people, the Catholic Charities Board of Trustees stands opposed to the proposed phase-out or closing of Craig Developmental Center and calls on the the governor and legislature of New York State to provide adequate financing for an efficient quality service for patients of Craig Developmental Center, whose needs cannot be sacrificed."

The board listed ten concerns on the proposed Craig closing or phase-out. Among those considerations are that of 350 patients slated to be at Craig after April 1, 32 percent are over 50, half are non-ambulatory, and 77 percent are profoundly retarded.

The board stated that "Most of these patients are long term patients and are naturally emotionally dependent on Craig staff... which for many, have become their family."

In addition, "The majority of patients at Craig are multiply disabled," the board said, adding that that factor "increases the risks and complexity of any relocation plan. Possible effects on these patients, according to research available... include deep psychiatric depression and in some cases even death."

The board also cited health care and economic effects in Livingston County should the facility close.

In a letter to Cuomo, Robert J. Burke, president of the board, stated: "Catholic Charities is extremely concerned that the proposed phase-out will incur traumatic effects on clients and families and friends of Craig and that the Center is needed.

"Catholic Charities Board understands the financial plight of New York State and that revenue increases and cost reductions are unpopular to everyone; however, the board believes that the rights to humane, compassionate care for this group of most severely disabled clients not be discarded."

On the question of the RPC cutbacks, the board resolved to ask "the governor and legislature of New York State to postpone any reduction in staffing at the Rochester Psychiatric Center until a full and open hearing is conducted in Rochester on the scope of the cutback, service areas to be impacted, projected effect on RPC patients and community and financial savings."

The question of staffing at RPC has been of significant public concern in the area for some time.

Deficient staffing at the facility has been cited at least three times in the past year, and the situation is such that the \$17 million of federal Medicaid reimbursement revenues, to cover the operations of the center, are in jeopardy.

The board's resolution states that the hearing is needed on the question because the governor's budget proposal is in direct conflict with already published information on the RPC's problems.

Burke, in a letter to Cuomo, asserted that the board believes "through some priority reassessment process, the funds needed to adequately staff and care for the residents of RPC could be found in other non-mental health program areas, e.g., corrections."

That point was also later raised at the board meeting and the board went on record in support of the program of the Correctional Association of New York, earlier endorsed by the Diocese of Rochester.

Viewpoint Sisters Reflect

By Sister Maureen Finn, S.S.J.



The Way To Peace

"Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice and brotherhood (and sisterhood)." I have always been struck by this quote, attributed to Martin Luther King Jr. and similar to the Vatican II statement from "The Church in the Modern World": "Peace is not merely the absence of war... It is rightly called an enterprise of justice" (Is. 32:7) (par. 78). But as I spent this past Christmas among the refugees in Honduras who have fled from the violence in El Salvador I couldn't help but think that at least the absence of war might enable these people (and the millions of refugees worldwide) to return home and to live some semblance of a normal life again.

For seven days I listened to the stories of these people — told with a strength and insight that I believe is the result of their faith in God and their personal and communal suffering. Is violence and war inevitable in a society so structured that the majority of people are unable to live with the most basic human necessities and rights? Justice for the men and women I talked with means being able to work in tranquility; to provide for their families a home, food, medical care, clothes, education; to be able to express their reality and live without fear.

One man, the head "Delegate of the Word" in the local Church, had refused to participate in the paramilitary organization in his village. As a result, he and his family of ten watched as the soldiers brutally killed their oldest son, cutting his limbs piece-by-piece. When I asked how a Christian can respond to such violence he said, without judgment, that some people are moved to fight back. He chose to leave his country rather than be part of either the oppression or the violent resistance.

A woman told us how she had been brutally beaten as she stood up to the Salvadoran soldiers who had entered the refugee camp intending to take 35 men back to El Salvador. Her intervention prevented this happening, but she still suffers internal bleeding and severe headaches as a result of the soldiers' blows. She said, "I did not want these soldiers harmed — I prayed that God would give them human hearts." As she and so many others spoke of their suffering at the hands of violence, oppression and poverty, they referred to God's grace that gives them the strength to respond with love when on their own they know they would experience

hatred and desire retaliation. One woman said, "We know we are God's suffering people and we don't know why." We asked the lay leaders of the church in the refugee camp how they view the role of the Church. "The Church goes ahead of the people in the work of justice." Archbishop Oscar Romero and the priests, Sisters, and lay workers who have been murdered in El Salvador are remembered in song and prayer as the people gather for worship.

I stood in front of the crowded tent-church for Mass on the final Sunday of my visit, surrounded by hundreds of men, women and children of all ages. I was overwhelmed as I realized that these very people are those we in the U.S. label "guerrillas," "subversives" or "communists." The U.S. government supports the military-run government of El Salvador with millions of dollars in aid. As we pray and work for peace we need to ask for the grace of conversion in our own lives. We need to see beyond our own fears, beyond the stereotypes and labels we place on others and begin, with God's grace, to understand and to love those who are different from us, those whose choices may not be ours. Peace will not come by making refugees of peasants but by recognizing the rights and ability of people to choose their own future.

Sister Maureen, director of the Queen of Peace Parish Social Ministry in Selma, Ala., visited the refugee camps at Mesa Grande, ten miles from the El Salvador border, in December.

Aid Needed For Elderly

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program of the Regional Council on Aging, 177 Clinton Ave. N., needs volunteers to visit patients in nursing homes 4-6 hours per week. The Ombudsman Program gives volunteers an opportunity to help elderly citizens resolve their problems, improve the quality of their care and the quality of their lives. Training, supervision and back-up support are provided for volunteers who should be people with a sincere liking for elderly citizens.

The organization's next training session for volunteers is in late April. Contact the Ombudsman Program at the Regional Council on Aging at 454-3224.

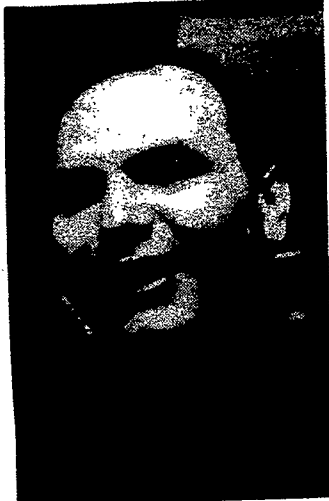
Deadline

Items intended for publication must be typed and in the Courier-Journal offices by noon Thursday before the Wednesday publication. The Courier-Journal is located at 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Principal Post Opens For Br. Walderman

By Joan M. Smith

Brother John Walderman, CFC, who has been at Bishop Kearney for seven years in the capacity of assistant principal, dean of discipline, basketball coach, and religion and American History instructor, recently received what he termed "a bolt out of the blue." He was named principal of Bishop Hendricken High School in Warwick, Rhode Island.



BR. JOHN WALDERMAN

If Brother Walderman was busy before his appointment he is doubly so now. Besides handling his many BK duties, he has a stack of orientation material about the new school to absorb. He isn't complaining, however; in fact he is looking forward to the new challenge.

"My first year (at Bishop Hendricken)," he said, "will be used as a learning year." Although there is much to learn about the school's philosophy and direction, Brother Walderman assumes his new principalship with definite ideas of what a principal should be — available, a listener, a helper — and what Catholic education should be — aware of the technological changes

in society and preparing the students to take their part, but not neglecting the basics; and to teach moral values, showing the students the importance of values to any action they take.

Brother Walderman, in his capacity of dean of discipline — an intimidating term at best — has a reputation for being fair. According to Mrs. Marge Sullivan, BK office personnel, students who have been disciplined by him have told her, "He really was right," and he's respected for this, she said. Also according

to Mrs. Sullivan, his rapport with the students doesn't end with graduation. "When the alumni come back to visit BK," she said, "they ask directions to his office."

The dean of discipline's office is in the boys wing of the school, not far from the gym where Brother Walderman has coached basketball for four years. Recently when he talked with the Courier-Journal, he discussed this year's team which, "for a young team (one senior played)," he said, "did very well," and added they projected teamwork. He also talked about what he would take away with him from BK, like the tremendous spirit of cooperation and hard work of the faculty and students, and the enjoyment of belonging to the BK family and having made a contribution. "It's been a positive experience," he said.

Did he have any apprehensions about the new job? No more than most people who change jobs. "It's like leaving behind an old, comfortable slipper and putting on a new pair of shoes," he explained. "You're afraid they'll pinch at first but then you get used to them."

Changes, however, are the norm for the religious orders and Brother Walderman has had his share. Since joining the Christian Brothers in 1963 his assignments have included Iona Grammar School in New Rochelle, Long Island; Commander Shea High School in Spanish Harlem, and Blessed Sacrament High School in New Rochelle where he served as dean of discipline.

Brother is a native of the Bronx in New York City where he attended Cardinal Hayes High School. He received his BA in history and MS in education from Iona College.

Brother Walderman will assume his new duties in July at Bishop Hendricken which is an all-boys school with an enrollment of 1,100 students. According to Brother Walderman, it has a strong, total athletic program. "I'll try to be their number one fan," he said.

Catherine Wobus, St. Joseph's House Cited for Service

Catherine Wobus, case-work director of Catholic Family Center, has been named Social Worker of the Year by the Genesee Valley Division of the National Association of Social Workers.

And St. Joseph's House of Hospitality has been singled out for the group's Humanitarian Award.

Miss Wobus was cited for putting "tremendous energy into programs that keep in touch with the needs of the times... she has a vision of social work that is not static... she is a professional supervisor... she continues to keep her agency active in

community programs... her influence is far reaching... she balances professionalism and understanding with reality... she demands the best from herself and others."

The Catholic Worker foundation was praised for its "tireless" service "as you provide food and shelter to a portion of society which is rejected by others and often rejects itself... you continue to serve without much thanks... there always seems to be a way to help one more person."

The awards were presented at the society's annual dinner last Saturday.

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