

Current Unemployment 'Morally Unjustified'

First in a five-part series
By Jerry Filteau
NC News Service

Washington -- "A job with adequate pay should be available to all who seek one," says the first draft of the U.S. bishops' pastoral on Catholic social teaching and the American economy.

"Current (U.S.) levels of unemployment and their attendant costs are morally unjustified," it declares. It calls job creation and a policy of full employment "the most urgent priority for U.S. domestic economic policy."

The draft document, written by a five-bishop committee headed by Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee, focuses on employment as one of five major economic issues confronting Americans in which policy decisions have significant moral implications.

At the heart of the moral significance of employment is the Catholic teaching that work is a fundamental right and duty of every person.

Summarizing key Catholic moral principles concerning work, the pastoral draft says:

"Employment is crucial to self-realization for the worker and to the fulfillment of material needs. It also forms the first line of defense against poverty. Work with adequate pay rather than welfare should be available to all who are able and willing to undertake it.

"Persons working full time should receive wages and other benefits adequate to ensure that they and their families do not fall into poverty. Income for families should also be sufficient to enable one of the parents to spend time at home devoted to the care and education of small children without prejudice to the equal rights of men and women in family and society."

Put another way, work is not just a necessary evil, something people have to do to stay alive. Work, the document says, is a positive activity with "a three-fold moral significance."

It explains that work "embodies the distinctive human capacity for self-realization and self-expression," that it is one of the "chief ways" of fulfilling both material needs and spiritual capacities for initiative and creativity, and that it is an act of social solidarity, contributing not only to one's own self and family but to the common good of society.

Major U.S. problems that the draft document says must be corrected include:

- The high level of unemployment, which at 7.4 percent of the labor force is "morally unjustified" in America today.
- The continuing disproportionate effects of unemployment and underemployment on certain groups,

notably those who are "black, Hispanic, young and female heads of households."

The draft calls for a national policy of "full employment," which it defines as an unemployment level of 3 to 4 percent -- what economists consider the "frictional" or transitional level that would still be there if everyone seeking a job were to find one within a reasonably short time.

The draft cites many economic costs of unemployment to society itself: the costs of assistance programs for the unemployed, losses in revenues from income and sales taxes that would have resulted if those persons were employed, and the many indirect costs to society because of higher crime rates and illness rates that have been linked to joblessness.

But it cites as even more significant morally the "effects of joblessness on human dignity" for the unemployed and their families. The unemployed suffer loss of self-respect and have higher rates of mental disorders, including suicidal tendencies, it says. Regarding the effect on families it says: "Unemployment can give rise to family quarrels, alcoholism, child abuse, divorce, and even to higher rates of infant mortality."

The document questions the conventional wisdom that low unemployment and high inflation are closely linked, saying that experience does not consistently support this hypothesis. It attacks as "dangerous" a tendency by some economists to speak of a "natural rate" of unemployment. This ignores the extent to which institutions and policies under human control affect the unemployment rate, it says.

The pastoral draft stresses that "no single all-purpose cure is available" to generate more jobs and reduce unemployment in the United States. Rather, it suggests a series of programs or policies, at various levels and in both the public and private sectors, which it says can contribute, each in a partial way, to solving the problem.

As a first principle it says that both public and private sector programs must be "sharply focused on the purpose of actually helping the unemployed" so as to avoid wasting funds and energy on supporting or generating jobs that would have opened up on their own anyway.

As a second principle, "regular, long-term employment" rather than short-term quick-fix schemes ought to take priority, the draft says. In the public sector, it notes, there are major programs of public investment, such as rebuilding roads, bridges and harbors, that can contribute significantly to reducing unemployment.

The draft's third principle is related: that the jobs created should produce "goods and services valued and needed by society," not only for internal reasons, but

One key reason for concern about the ERA, he said, was its potential to "butress" legalized abortion unless it is amended to exclude abortion from its scope.

Bishop James W. Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference, in his presidential address Nov. 12 also focused on abortion, nuclear weapons, economic injustice and other public policy issues as a central part of Catholic Church concerns in the United States today.

The bishops, he said, must continue to play a role in "shaping public opinion" on "a broad spectrum of issues" that face the nation.

As controversy swirled around the bishops' current and developing social positions, however, they also used the four-day meeting to address an equally broad spectrum of other church concerns.

They adopted a formal position on the conclusions of an ecumenical dialogue for

the first time, unanimously approving an evaluation of the Final Report by ARCIC I, the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission.

The evaluation found many positive points in the Final Report, which contains Anglican-Catholic agreements on the Eucharist, ministry and authority in the church.

On a number of issues, particularly regarding the Eucharist and ministry, the bishops said that the agreed statements of faith by ARCIC I's members are "consonant with" the Roman Catholic faith.

On other issues, particularly regarding papal infallibility and nature of papal primacy, the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, and eucharistic adoration, the bishops' evaluation found the ARCIC I agreements ambiguous or inadequate. They asked the recently established ARCIC II to study these issues further.

The Bishops And the Economy JOBS

because public support for job generation is essential, and the public will not support programs it perceives as "make work."

Efficiency, low cost, and minimal inflationary impact ought also to be considered as factors in job creation programs, the draft says, but it adds that effects on inflation "should not be the sole or even the overriding criteria in deciding on jobs policies." The point of this principle, it says, is that inflation should be considered as a factor only in deciding among possible programs, not as a determinant for rejecting all programs.

In terms of recent government policies where alleged trade-offs between unemployment and inflation have consistently occupied center stage of the political debate, the draft's principle on inflation could become one of the most controversial of its statements on employment.

As a final principle, the draft emphasizes the roles that both the private sector and the government should play in creating jobs. It says private enterprise must play a major role, because that is where most U.S. jobs are and where most new jobs are being created. At the same time the government "has a legitimate and necessary role," especially in stimulating and coordinating job creation initiatives, it says. It rejects as "fruitless" the "ideological disputes" that look solely to government or solely to the private sector for all the answers.

NEXT WEEK: Poverty.

Pastoral on Racism 'Best Kept Secret'

Newark, N.J. (NC) -- The 1979 U.S. bishops' pastoral on racism remains "the best kept secret in the U.S. church," said Auxiliary Bishop Joseph A. Francis of Newark in a statement marking the fifth anniversary of the pastoral.

The bishop said he would distribute the statement at the U.S. bishops' meeting in Washington.

"Had our words been taken seriously by clergy, Religious and laity, millions of blacks and other racial minorities in our country and perhaps around the world would really have something to celebrate on this fifth anniversary," the statement said.

Bishop Francis headed the original subcommittee which wrote the pastoral, "Brothers and Sisters to Us," which was approved Nov. 14, 1979. He is one of 10 black Catholic U.S. bishops.

"It would be comforting to millions of people of all races if I could relate that the pastoral on racism has made a significant difference in the racial attitudes and practices of sisters and brothers in the Catholic Church in the USA," the statement said.

"I fear that it has not. In fact, I have often called it the 'best kept secret in the U.S. church.'"

Bishop Francis weighed the impact of the racism pastoral against the U.S. bishops' 1983 pastoral on war and peace.

"How encouraged we would be if this pastoral on racism had received the same kind of publicity and acceptance as the pastoral on war and peace, issued by the same conference of bishops," he said.

The racism pastoral discussed "devastation of peoples of the past, the present and the future," while the peace pastoral addressed "a devastation not yet upon us, but close enough and possible enough to move the entire nation and even the world to action in behalf of peace," the statement said.

The pastorals are innately similar because they address human dignity and survival. "Both pastorals flow from the same concern for the sanctity of life," it said.

Bishop Francis's message reiterated the original pastoral's theme "racism is a sin" but also "a reality in our country and within our church."

The statement called international mistrust based on racism "the finger on the trigger of nuclear war."

U.S. Economy

Continued from Page 1.

portant tool for making the Gospel known and teaching people about the faith.

Three separate reports to the bishops touched on abortion.

Cardinal Bernardin, speaking for the Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities, stressed the "seamless garment" of respect for life at all stages and protecting it against all forms of attack.

It is that -- "consistent ethic," he said, which "gives us credibility and moral authority" when the bishops take stands on any specific issue -- the arms race, capital punishment, world hunger,

pornography, or the "evil and scandal of...1.5 million abortions a year."

Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco, head of the bishops' doctrinal committee, delivered a report Nov. 15 in which he sharply reproved efforts by Catholics who favor legalized abortion to describe the church's position on abortion as changing and inconsistent.

In a report evaluating the Equal Rights Amendment, Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis recommended that the U.S. bishops, while "unreservedly committed to justice between the sexes," remain officially neutral about the ERA.

Bishop Hickey

Continued from Page 1.

• The consultative bodies, councils and advisory committees of the diocese will be invited to review the draft.

• A consultative panel, led by Dr. Marvin Mich of St. Bernard's Institute, will critique the letter from a theological, academic and professional perspective.

• A public hearing will be held Jan. 22.

In a diocesan paper presented at Bishop Hickey's press conference, it was stated:

"The bishops state, 'The fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is the highest priority.' They add, 'Increased economic participation for the marginalized takes priority over the preservation of privileged concentrations of power, wealth and income.'

"These principles inform much of what the bishops

conclude in their dealing with specific issues. Thus, they say, 'The most urgent priority for U.S. domestic economic policy is the creation of new jobs with adequate pay and decent working conditions.' And in discussing poverty in America they decry the increasing numbers of poor people in a nation as wealthy as ours is a social and moral scandal that must not be ignored."

"Throughout the pastoral letter the bishops call for cooperative efforts between all actors in the economy of the nation. They reject the suggestion that the issues they discuss can be handled adequately by either the private or the public sector. Instead, both must be dynamically engaged in responding to the urgent moral demands posed by the needs of the people of the U.S. and the world."

End Apartheid Policy, 17 Bishops Ask U.S.

Washington (NC) -- Seventeen U.S. bishops have called on the Reagan administration to end its policy of "constructive engagement" with South Africa and to implement a U.N. plan for Namibian independence from the white-ruled nation.

The bishops' statement, issued Nov. 15, also condemned South Africa's system of racial segregation, apartheid, and called for immediate relief and long-term development to help relieve famine in two dozen African nations.

At a press conference announcing the statement, Bishop Daniel P. Reilly of

Norwich, Conn., chairman of the board of Catholic Relief Services, called apartheid "an evil system."

"It is not acceptable for our nation to go along with the oppression of three fourths of a nation simply because that three fourths is not white," Bishop Reilly said.

"Constructive engagement" refers to the Reagan administration's strategy of seeking independence for Namibia and change in South Africa's racial policies through quiet diplomacy and friendly persuasion.

Auxiliary Bishop Joseph

Francis of Newark, N.J., one of 10 black bishops who signed the statement, said at the press conference that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has not developed a list of specific ways to pressure the U.S. government because it had not been asked to do so by the Southern Africa Catholic Bishops' Conference.

He also emphasized that the statement was not an official stand of the NCCB, but only reflected the opinions of its signers. He said the document's originators had not had a chance to approach all the bishops for

their endorsement.

The statement said it was "imperative" that the bishops "categorically denounce the apartheid system as contrary to the Gospel of Christ" because the South African government claims its policies are "based on 'Christian principles' and (it) purports to be a 'Christian civilization.'"

The statement also quoted from Pope John Paul II's remarks to the U.N. Special Committee Against Apartheid, when he said, "Every form of discrimination based on race...is absolutely unacceptable."