

Editorial

One Picture

Cartoonist Ed Sullivan's work has been gracing the editorial page of this newspaper for well over 10 years. Usually, his efforts reflect the fun and/or foibles of everyday Catholic church life.

This week's offering, however, moves into the world of satire. With keen insight, he cuts to the heart of the matter of an affluent people going about their daily work wearing blinders concerning those being shunted aside to make room for the successful.

The Reagan administration consistently ignores the needy among us. To be blunt, this president has built a solid constituency among Catholics because of his favorable positions concerning abortion and Catholic schools. And also because many of this faith agree with Mr. Reagan on his unswerving loyalty to the so-called needs of the Pentagon, even at the expense of those Americans who need food and shelter.

Some questions should be asked: Isn't it possible to defend this nation without disinherit large segments of its people? Isn't it possible to support the right to religious education and to oppose abortion and at the same time devote tender, loving care (that translates into money) for stricken Americans? Isn't it possible for the most powerful nation in the world to maintain its position in the international pecking order without creating a caste system at home?

Consider just one inconsistency of the Reagan mentality. Four years ago, the private sector was asked to do more on its own to aid the indigent, the infirm, the elderly. A government of the people and

for the people, we were told, should not really care for the people. Despite the questionable premise of that kind of thinking, Americans worked to take on more of the responsibility of helping their poor.

Now, four years later, the administration wants to make contributions to charitable causes no longer tax-deductible. This is reprehensible, not only because of the financial incentive involved, but because now many more will be unable to pitch in and do the job thrust on them by a government which would rather spend its (should that be "our"?) money on machines of hell rather than food from heaven. The agencies relying on such donations are generally efficient in reaching those in need and the whole effect of such cooperation does an important job of building community.

Is anyone in the government considering what will happen if United Way, for instance, must cut back -- or Catholic Charities or anti-cancer organizations or the countless charities performed by Catholic parishes throughout the land?

What will be left to defend? Quite definitely not the spirit expressed by that statue in New York harbor. Surely not the rules for living set down by Jesus Christ. Not even the common sense decency we all recognize in our hearts.

Will we have megabuck-contraptions floating in the heavens to protect a family living in an abandoned bus or some cast aside human derelicts living in a crate under the arches? With the kind of attitude expressed by a Reagan official a couple of years ago that there are really no poor in this nation; the numbers of these "invisible" Americans have increased.

The poor have been defeated. Now is it the hour for the middle class?

Yes, the Sullivan cartoon cuts right to the core of the problem and sadly that seems to be the cold heart of an insensitive American government.

Deadly

Disappointing but not surprising. That is the Gallup Poll finding that 72 percent of Americans favor capital punishment for murderers.

Disappointing because it means that a big majority of Americans emulate those they are killing.

And why should such findings come as a surprise in a society that resorts to death as remedy or as a means of satisfaction in the face of many of its serious problems? Abortion, euthanasia, nuclear weapons and capital punishment are not solutions to but merely symptoms of a sick lifestyle.

Even more dismaying is the poll's report that a majority of Americans favor the death penalty even if they do not believe it deters crime. Color that vengeance.

To make it worse, about two thirds stated they believe that a poor person is more likely to be executed than a middle-class or richer person convicted of the same crime. It is chilling to ponder that statistic.

The bottom line? The largest number of pro-death penalty Americans feel that way out of revenge (30 percent); 22 percent for deterrence; 18 percent for punishment and 11 percent because it is cheaper than keeping criminals in prison.

Ugh!

and Opinions

The Way To Starvation

EDITOR:

For hundreds of years pastoral nomads roamed the semi-arid land, the Sahel, south of the Sahara. Their livestock were herded over hundreds of miles from rainy season pastures to oases of perennial grasses that live from year to year in dry seasons.

Their herds were a variety of donkey, camel, sheep, cattle and goat. Water needs were kept flexible since each animal's requirement was different.

Also scarce and varied plant life -- low shrubs for goats, low parts of trees for camels, grass for sheep and cattle were used. Different species also have different reproductive cycles, which kept herds balanced and milk production constant through the year.

Their meat and dairy products were sufficient to exchange for grain from farmers. The manure from the animals fertilized the soil for the farmers, the animals had good grazing land. This helpful relationship allowed remarkably dense populations to live in seemingly inhospitable lands.

Several factors led to the change in the nomadic way of life and created an imbalance in nature.

First, the colonial administration of France created arbitrary political boundaries without regard for the mobility needed by the native pastoralists. A tax was levied, so variety in the herds gave way to cash-valuable beef cattle. A dry spell could kill because cattle need more water than traditional desert animals.

Colonial empires also created export economies in most of Africa. Some U.S. and European companies grew peanuts and vegetables for export on lands traditionally used for migration.

This is all part of the background of the present famine in Africa. Long term

plans need to be made to solve the problem.

In the meantime, relief is spelled F-O-O-D. The great feeding miracles (Matthew 14:13, Mark 6:32, Luke 9, John 6) made clear not only that the basic act of love is feeding, but also that justice begins with the equal distribution of food. The only explicit picture of a person in Hell is of a person who lets his leprosy neighbor starve on his doorstep (Luke 6:19).

We are called to relieve the pain of starvation. One thing you can do is write or call your congressmen and/or the president to urge passage of House Bill 6203 (the Africa Relief and Recovery Act) which will provide help from the US government.

Mary Rita Crowe
2052 E. Main St.
Apt. 74
Rochester, N. Y. 14609

Gov. Misleading On Education

EDITOR:

The Feb. 13 issue of the Opinion Page contained a statement by Gov. Cuomo on the matter of state spending for nonpublic schools.

In researching the proposed increased spending, it is interesting to note that of the \$54 million in anticipated increases cited by the governor, only \$18 million is attributable to his initiative. And of the \$18 million, only \$6.7 million has been realized to date (\$5.3 million in textbook aid and \$1.4 million in computer software). The remaining \$11.3 million represents proposals which may or may not be approved by the legislature (\$8.8 million for a program for educationally disadvantaged pupils, \$1.1 million for library materials and \$1.4 million for an increase in computer software funds).

Most of the governor's claimed \$54 million increase is in spending categories which Mr. Cuomo does not control and which would

have increased under any governor. The \$21 million transportation hike is the result of higher transportation costs incurred at the district level, which the state reimburses roughly at the rate of 90 percent. Mandated services have increased by \$9 million not only because of inflation but also because of additional state mandates, such as the fifth grade writing test. The \$5.7 million increase in private excess costs represents funds for "high-cost" special education children who have been placed in private schools by a school's COH only because there is no public program available.

In sum, while the governor's support is appreciated, his statement and supporting data are somewhat misleading.

Sister M. Edwardine RSM
Superintendent of Schools
Rochester Diocese
1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14624

Work For Change

EDITOR:

In the comments following John Starkweather's letter, "Post Stand Reported," (1/23/85), the Courier-Journal stated that "criticism of capitalism does not constitute an endorsement of communism."

Who said that it did? What critics of the bishops' letter on economics are saying is that the letter attacks the very source of wealth; the free enterprise system.

If only the bishops would investigate one major cause of poverty, "communist imperialism," they would be far more productive in their efforts to help the poor.

A good example of this oversight was Senator Ted Kennedy's recent trip to Ethiopia.

Despite his concern for the sick and dying, the senator nevertheless voiced no criticism of Colonel Mengistu's communist regime that cele-

brated an anniversary of the revolution spending millions of dollars while the people starved.

National Review magazine stated in their Feb. 8 issue:

"...Mengistu's Marxist regime has seized on the famine for political purposes. The hardest hit provinces, Eritrea and Tigre, have been in revolt against the central government for years; none of the aid that flows into Addis Ababa reaches more than the handful of garrison towns that the government controls. Starving peasants who trek in for relief must show the correct papers or die. The government uses much of the food it is given to feed the conscript army, or to resell, at a profit, to the Sudan."

In light of these findings, would it not be better to work for a change in governments than to send aid that only might reach the starving and strengthen a Marxist dictatorship?

Robert W. Bart
Box 594
Ithaca, N.Y. 14851

Abortion's Silent Partner

EDITOR:

In a letter on Feb. 6, Barbara Clark stated in reference to abortion that "no government may ever usurp an individual's right to weigh options, consult her conscience and make that choice for herself."

My question to Ms. Clark is: When has death ever been an option that one individual can choose for another, especially one who cannot yet speak for itself?

Also, how can ending another's life be justified in anyone's conscience?

It is amazing how the pro-abortion movement waves the flag of freedom, free speech and individual rights but only insofar as it can serve their purpose. With freedom comes the great responsibility to be sensitive to



"Y' HAFTA APPRECIATE A GOD-FEARIN' COUNTRY THAT KIN BUILD A FREEWAY SHELTER LIKE THIS."

the rights of others -- the most basic being that of the right to live -- the freedom of life.

I find offensive the statement that abortion should remain a woman's individual right. Individual means one or singular. Two individuals are always involved in an abortion -- the woman (who chooses to end the life she is

responsible for) and the child. That child is an individual entitled to the same rights and freedom that the woman who carries that child has. It is sad that the child will never have freedom to express its own individual opinion.

Mary Ellen Frisch
2 Blossomdale Circle
Hamlin, N.Y. 14464

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's signature, full address and telephone number. They should be sent to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union S., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and the letters will reflect the writer's own style.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent elsewhere. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.